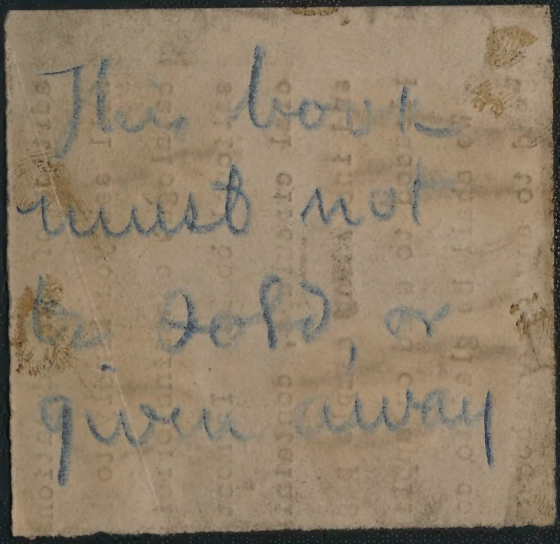
MORRIS'S
ATALANTA'S RACE, ETC.

EDITED BY

OSCAR FAY ADAMS AND WILLIAM J. ROLFE



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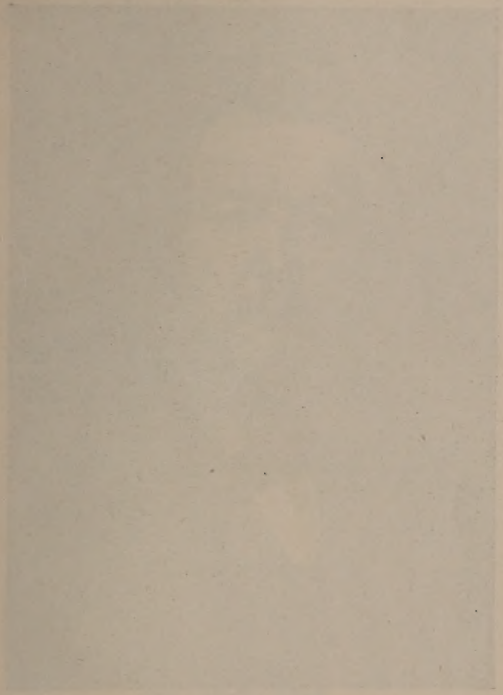
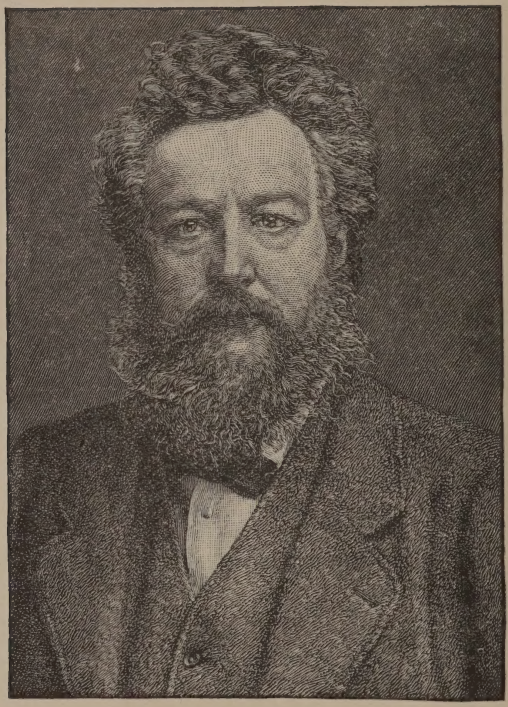
ATALANTA'S RACE

And Other Tales from The Earthly Paradise.





Yours truly
William Morris

ATALANTA'S RACE

And Other Tales from The Earthly Paradise

By WILLIAM MORRIS

Edited with Notes

By OSCAR FAY ADAMS

with the co-operation of

WILLIAM J. ROLFE, A.M., Litt.D.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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PREFACE.

In bringing this volume of selections from *The Earthly Paradise* into suitable form for school reading and study, the desire of the editor has been to do whatever was possible to popularize the verse of one of the great poets of the Victorian era. While William Morris has never been without a select circle of sincere admirers, his books have been left unread by the majority of readers, who have been deterred, it may be, by the great length of many of his poems. When, however, he has once captured the attention of any one, the spell is never dissolved, the enchantment is never broken. The tales in *The Earthly Paradise*, it seems to me, are particularly well suited to win the affectionate interest of younger readers, who, as a rule, care little for lyric verse, but are often enthusiastic admirers of epic poetry. Bearing this latter fact in mind, I have, in the preparation of the notes to these selections from Morris's verse, sought to give such help in elucidation as seemed needful for the wants of various grades of students, trusting that the beauty of the poetry and the interest of the several narratives would foster a desire to know more intimately this great story-teller of our day.

In the preparation of the text, English and American editions have been carefully compared, several errors in the latter having been corrected and one or two mistakes rectified that have escaped the notice of all the printers up to the present time. For instance, the American edition of *The Earthly Paradise* of 1884 on page 213 misprints *hailed* for *haled;* and all the editions, so far as I know, agree in misprinting *folks* for *folk* in line 116 of the *Prologue*. The five-volume edition of

The Earthly Paradise, published by Reeves & Turner, is particularly faulty in regard to punctuation, the American editions of Roberts Brothers being much superior in this respect. The punctuation of the present volume has been most scrupulously revised by Dr. William J. Rolfe, whose accuracy in such matters is unquestioned; and throughout the entire work I have had the benefit of his friendly suggestion and wealth of experience.

O. F. A.

Felton Hall, Cambridge, Mass.,
March 16, 1888.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF WILLIAM MORRIS.[1]

William Morris, best known as a poet, but notable on several grounds, was born at Walthamstow,[2] and was educated at Marlborough and at Exeter College, Oxford. In 1856 he was articled to the late Mr. Street, the architect, and took his degree; and in the same year he had made a noteworthy *début* in literature in founding *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. Although he did not edit this remarkable periodical, he supported the cost of it through the twelve months of its existence, and contributed very largely to its pages, which contain some of his early poems,[3] a number of highly curious romantic prose stories, and some critical papers. In 1858 Mr. Morris, who did not stay with Mr. Street the full time of his articles,[4] marked a great progress in literature by the publication of *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems*, a volume in which the poetical and dramatic aspects of the Middle Ages are embodied in a series of truly original poems and songs.[5] In 1867 he issued *The Life and Death of Jason*, a poem in seventeen books of heroic couplets, in which his hand had clearly arrived at the strength of

[1] From article on William Morris, by Harry Buxton Forman, in *Celebrities of the Century*.

[2] March 24, 1834.

[3] *Summer Dawn* is one of these.

[4] He remained with Mr. Street only about nine months.

[5] This was favorably reviewed at length in the *University Magazine* by Mr. Richard Garnett of the British Museum, who was the first to recognize and appreciate the genius of the poet.

maturity; and in 1868 came out the first instalment of *The Earthly Paradise*, which, though called "a poem," is, in fact, a series of poems of classical and romantic legend and myth, artificially connected, as *The Canterbury Tales* are. In the mean time he had taken the leading part in establishing the fine-art decoration undertaking, which is now carried on under his name alone, but which originally bore the style of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, & Co. This undertaking has certainly been the most important agent in the reform which has taken place during the last twenty years in English decoration and English taste in color and design.

It was not till 1870 that the publication of *The Earthly Paradise* was completed; but meanwhile Mr. Morris had associated himself with Mr. Magnússon in producing some masterly prose translations from the Icelandic Sagas. Of these, *The Story of Grettir the Strong* appeared in 1869, and *The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs* in 1870. In 1873 came out a "morality," entitled *Love is Enough; or, The Freeing of Pharamond*, in which the influence of Mr. Morris's Icelandic studies was shown in the metre as well as the subject of his poem, as it had already been shown in the subject of some of the poems of *The Earthly Paradise*, notably, *The Lovers of Gudrun*. In 1875, under the title of *Three Northern Love Stories, and Other Tales*, Mr. Morris, again associated with Mr. Magnússon, gave his readers a further instalment of his translations from the Icelandic, of which some still remain in manuscript; and in the following year he issued, single-handed, *The Æneids of Virgil done into English Verse*, a book in the metre of Chapman's *Homer's Iliad*.

The author of *The Earthly Paradise* had called himself "the idle singer of an empty day," and had disclaimed, in terms which have been much misunderstood, the task of dealing with contemporary concerns. Even the less profound spiritual subjects from which tales of love and adventure cannot be wholly dissociated, had been touched with a light, though with an unerringly steady hand; but in the year 1878, which gave us Mr. Morris's masterpiece, *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs*, it became abundantly evident that the author was fully qualified to deal with profound spiritual matters,

and to deal with them in that region where they are primeval, the region of national mythos. The basis of *Sigurd* is to be found in the Icelandic *Völsunga Saga;* but the treatment is distinctively modern in reach and grasp, while the delineation is in perfect sympathy with the minds which originally caught and embodied the floating mythos. In and since 1878 he has lectured much on art; and his lectures have been published in pamphlets and volumes.

The profound concern in psychical study displayed in *Sigurd*, a poem of great ideal action, manifests itself at length in the concrete form of concern for the welfare of man's body and mind *now;* and from looking at art questions from a social and political point of view, Mr. Morris's action widened into that of a prime mover in an important phase of English social life. He became a leading spirit of the Socialist League, in whose organ, *The Commonweal*, a great part of what he produced now appeared. His notes, lectures, chants, and addresses connected with this movement may not become classical, as his best poems and translations have already become and must remain; but he embodied, in a poem of modern life called *The Pilgrims of Hope*, his political convictions and social teachings. Over and above superlative metrical, rhythmical, and other technical excellences, and a gift of language unsurpassed in modern literature for native vigor and purity, Mr. Morris shows in all his works a rare apprehension of the outward shows of things, and a power of placing what he sees clearly before the minds of others. In the great bulk of his works, his vision was cast longingly and somewhat sadly back upon the larger life of ancient days. Perhaps he has not changed his point of view so much as superficial observers might think; ripened experience and mature thought, increasing his perception of the deadly dangers with which our modern civilization is fraught, have taught him an optimist's yearning for a state of society in which all men might be happy.

MORRIS'S STYLE.[1]

Mr. Morris's style is characterized by eminent simpleness, and hence by eminent felicity. He is occasionally monotonous, no doubt, — a monotony springing from a certain primitive homeliness of treatment and expression, which adds to the truthful effect, and is yet consistent, as we have seen, with the most brilliant pictorial effects. His simple Saxon, in short, is full of quiet fire and strength.

Speaking generally, Mr. Morris adheres closely to the story he is narrating. He keeps the *motive* as the dominant impression of a work of art very clearly before his own eyes and those of his readers. Very unobtrusively the vital impulse, the central and governing impression of each piece, is seized, subduing to itself the subordinate incidents and emotions, and stamping its character upon the whole. He sometimes fails in this respect, as in the story of the life of Admetus, where the leading idea, the divine sacrifice of Alcestis, is faintly and confusedly impressed upon the narrative; but this is the exception, not the rule. There is, moreover, a noticeable simplicity or naturalness of incident, as well as of style, in these stories. The action and its consequences — the sequence of event — are conceived and carried out with perfect faithfulness. He can be episodical and garrulous, but this happens because there is a bit of history which needs to be told. Somebody was so-and-so's grandfather; and if something befell somebody, the audience will expect to hear all about it. He has, as we have seen, a fine eye for natural beauty; but nature is not dwelt upon passionately: the dawn, the night, the woodland, the sea, are introduced incidentally, and in so far only as they are required by and explanatory of the narrative. If adornment come in easily, well and good; but not otherwise. An old poet saw a pair of lovers riding through the woodland. They rode on; and as they rode he saw them now in the deep shade, now with a glint of sunshine reflected from the helmet of the knight. They met the adventures which befell them in the

[1] "William Morris and Matthew Arnold," by John Skelton, in *Fraser's Magazine*, February, 1869.

same way that real men and women meet the incidents of life, — simply, inevitably. But the modern poet creates the sunshine and fashions the adventure. He has no knowledge of perspective; the background encroaches upon the foreground; the landscape overwhelms the narrative. Among all our many poets there are only two who, to my mind, adhere unreservedly to the old style, — Walter Scott and William Morris.[1]

Mr. Morris possesses an imagination that soars easily and without visible effort. The most noticeable feature in his poetry is its limpid, liquid flow; but when the theme rises, the muse rises too. Thus his treatment of a high heroic passage to which we have looked forward anxiously — as testing the strength of the writer — never or seldom disappoints us.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MORRIS'S VERSE.[2]

WHETHER we read Chaucer or Mr. Morris, we get much the same processional splendor of descriptiveness where multitudes and largeness of action are concerned, the same minute yet significant delicacy of detail where individual action is the artist's subject, the same comprehensive attention to situation and surroundings, the same naïve implicitness of belief where anything inconceivable to a modern mind is to be told, as is constantly the case with both poets. In this they are rivals, standing apart

[1] But the natural old-time manner of procedure which Skelton eulogizes makes a Quarterly Reviewer indignant; and with a singular blindness to what constitutes one of the chiefest charms in Morris's verse, he says: "An incurable habit of gossiping causes him to loiter in his narratives when he should be swift and stirring. If one of his heroes, say the Man Born to be King, set out on a journey of life and death, we are told all that he thought about, whether the apples that he saw were ripe, and how many old women he passed going to market. If a princess has occasion to look out of a window, Mr. Morris peeps to see what sort of a carpet she is standing on; and when he has married a pair of lovers in the middle of a story, he pauses to breathe a tearful blessing after them, telling them to make the most of their time, as they will probably some day grow tired of each other's company, and at any rate they will have to die."

[2] From *Our Living Poets*, by Harry Buxton Forman.

from all others, — that they show a full sympathy with that stage of human development represented in each tale; and this is compassed partly by a forthright statement of the facts as they are supposed to have occurred, and partly by such an ingenuous and inventorial minuteness of circumstance as disarms all suspicion that the narrator questions the sincerity of his tale. Now, this is the most indispensable quality to be sought for in simple tale-telling; and without this, the utmost agreeableness of diction and the highest perfection of metre and rhythm are of no avail. We must not forget that this Chaucerian class of poetry is altogether unmodern, so that, unless it reached in the hands of a contemporary artist such a perfection as it might attain in the social medium wherein it first grew up, it could not receive more than a meagre recognition; and the cordial reception of Mr. Morris speaks volumes as to the quality of his tale-singing.

It is natural that most of the characteristics of contemporary poetic workmanship should be at a minimum in these productions; and in the use of metres and so on, we find Mr. Morris entirely estranged from his contemporaries. Instead of inventing new metres, he has adopted three good homely instruments used by Chaucer, — the seven-lined stanza of *Troilus and Creseide*, *The Flower and the Leaf*, and other poems; the old-fashioned five-foot couplet of *The Knight's Tale*, used by Pope in translating the *Iliad;* and the four-foot couplet of *The Romaunt of the Rose*, and *The Book of the Duchess*, afterwards employed in the construction of *Hudibras;* and of these instruments he has availed himself without that attention to minute construction shown in modern metres, or in pre-existent metres under modern treatment. We get here broad cadences of music, an unfaltering flow of rhythm, easy perspicuity of rhyme, fine large outlines of construction, but not usually any minute delicacies or startling intricacies; and this is precisely what should be the case, for this reason: Mr. Morris's works treat largely of action, incident, external form, color, and so on, and he usually deals with only the simpler phases of emotion. His subjects engage attention in regard to the development of the story; and it would be an interruption hardly desirable to have to pause over minutiæ of manipulation when we want to follow out the large effects of the artist. The adornments that we want

and get take the form of vivid and exquisite pictures, resulting from force of imagination and readiness of expression, and so clear and well-defined as to need no study on the reader's part to take them in. The interest is always sufficiently sustained by wealth of imagination, unfaltering straightforwardness of action, entire absence of anything like commonplace, and an adequate degree of force, sweetness, and propriety of expression. Above all, the work is always distinctly poetry; not prose draped in a transparent veil of pseudo-poetry. To whatever length his works may run, we do not miss in them that condensation without which verse can never be poetry. . . .

In the ordinary books of reference, mythology and folk-lore, especially Greek myth and romance, are reduced to their lowest possible terms, and deprived of all aroma; but in Mr. Morris's books we have the added aroma of true poetic method and imagination to supply what is so delicately fugitive in the ordinary process of distillation, as well as a rare discriminative tact to eliminate such of the grosser elements of the subject as are inessential, though retained in the exaggerated prose nakedness of the books of reference. These poems are such as no man need scruple to take home to his wife and leave within reach of his children; for if unimpregnated with modern doctrine, they are at least innocent of what is gross in ancient creeds. Of philosophy there is just enough to afford the poet a point of view from which to treat his subjects. Without a moderately palpable point of view it is impossible to show great unity of intention; but Mr. Morris's point of view, though sufficient for this purpose, is as unmodern as his subjects and method. In fact, whatever philosophy is expressed or implied gives rise to no inconvenience in treating his chosen subjects: from the hardy minds of the Old World he has adopted all that is kindly, humane, resignedly brave, and a little of what is sad in the pathetic belief in a short life soon to be forgotten; but the evident healthiness of a robust manly soul has saved him from deforming his works by any fatal admixture of that maudlin antitheism which cannot but mar the calm beauty of an antique ideal. There is no trace here of unhealthy revolt against circumstance and law; and although we may learn lessons to struggle after attainable good and away from avoidable evil, we are made to feel at the same time the beauty and strength of manly submission to the inevitable; so

that if one calls the poet "pagan," it is but in the negative sense of exhibiting no essential and distinctively modern principle, æsthetic, ethic, or religious.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE.[1]

The plan of *The Earthly Paradise* was conceived in a day that should be marked by a white stone, since for this poet to undertake it was to complete it. The effort was so sure to adjust itself to his genius (which is epic rather than dramatic) that the only question was one of time, and that is now a question of the past. In this important work Morris reaches the height of his success as a relator. His poems always have been stories. Even the shortest ballads in his first book are upon themes from the old chronicles. *The Earthly Paradise* has the universe of fiction for a field, and reclothes the choicest and most famous legends of Asia and Europe with the delicate fabric of its verse. Greek and Oriental lore, the tales of the *Gesta Romanorum*, the romance of the *Nibelungen-Lied*, and even the myths of the *Eddas*, contribute to this thesaurus of narrative song. All these tales are familiar: many are of a type from which John Fiske or Müller would prove their long descent, tracing them far as the "most eastern East;" but never before did they appear in more attractive shape, or fall so musically from a poet's honeyed mouth. Their fascination is beyond question. We listen to the narrator, as Arabs before the desert fire hang upon the lips of one who recites some legend of the good Haroun. Here is a successor to Boccaccio and to Chaucer. The verse, indeed, is exclusively Chaucerian, of which three styles are used, — the heroic, sestina, and octosyllabic. Chance quotations show with what felicity and perfect ease the modern poet renews the cadences of his master. Take one from *Atalanta's Race:*

> "Through thick Arcadian woods a hunter went,
> Following the beasts up, on a fresh spring day;
> But since his horn-tipped bow, but seldom bent,
> Now at the noontide naught had happed to slay,
> Within a vale he called his hounds away,
> Hearkening the echoes of his lone voice cling
> About the cliffs, and through the beech-trees ring."

[1] From *The Victorian Poets*, by E. C. Stedman.

Another from *The Man Born to be King* : —

"So long he rode he drew anigh
A mill upon the river's brim,
That seemed a goodly place to him,
For o'er the oily, smooth mill-head
There hung the apples growing red,
And many an ancient apple-tree
Within the orchard he could see;
While the smooth mill-walls, white and black,
Shook to the great wheel's measured clack,
And grumble of the gear within;
While o'er the roof that dulled that din
The doves sat crooning half the day,
And round the half-cut stack of hay
The sparrows fluttered twittering."

And this from *The Story of Cupid and Psyche* : —

"From place to place Love followed her that day,
And ever fairer to his eyes she grew,
So that at last when from her bower she flew,
And underneath his feet the moonlit sea
Went shepherding his waves disorderly,
He swore that of all gods and men no one
Should hold her in his arms but he alone."

The couplet which I have italicized has an imaginative quality not frequent in Morris's verse, for the excellence of this poet lies rather in his clear vision and exquisite directness of speech. . . . In each of these metrical forms the verse is smooth and transparent, — the choice result of the author's Chaucerian studies, with what addition of beauty and suggestiveness his genius can bestow. His language is so pure that there absolutely is no resisting medium to obscure the interest of a tale. We feel that he enjoys his story as we do; yet the technical excellence, seen at once by a writer, scarcely is thought of by the lay reader, to whom poetry is in the main addressed. Morris easily grasps the feeling of each successive literature from which his stories are derived. He is at will a pagan, a Christian, or a worshipper of Odin and Thor; and especially has caught the spirit of those generations which, scarcely emerged from classicism in the South, and bordered by heathendom on the North, peopled their unhal-

lowed places with beings drawn from either source. Christ reigned, yet the old gods had not wholly faded out, but acted, whether fair or devilish, as subjects and allies of Satan. All this is magically conveyed in such poems as *The Ring given to Venus* and *The Lady of the Land.* The former may be consulted (and any other will do almost as well) for evidence of the advantage possessed by Morris through his knowledge of mediæval costumes, armor, dances, festivals, and all the curious paraphernalia of days gone by. So well equipped a virtuoso, and so facile a rhythmist, was warranted in undertaking to write *The Earthly Paradise*, broad as it is in scope, and extended to the enormous length of forty thousand lines. The result shows that he set himself a perfectly feasible task.

THE CHARM OF MORRIS'S POETRY.[1]

Morris, our sweet and simple Chaucer's child,
Dear heritor of Spenser's tuneful reed,
With soft and sylvan pipe has oft beguiled
The weary soul of man in troublous need,
And from the far and flowerless fields of ice
Has brought fair flowers, meet to make an earthly paradise.

We know them all, — Gudrun, the strong men's bride,
Aslaug and Olafson, we know them all:
How giant Grettir fought and Sigurd died,
And what enchantment held the king in thrall:
When lonely Brynhild wrestled with the powers
That war against all passion. Ah! how oft through summer hours, —

Long listless summer hours, when the noon,
Being enamoured of a damask rose,
Forgets to journey westward, till the moon,
The pale usurper of its tribute, grows
From a thin sickle to a silver shield,
And chides its loitering car, — how oft, in some cool grassy field,

[1] From *The Garden of Eros*, by Oscar Wilde.

Far from the cricket-ground and noisy eight,
  At Bagley, where the rustling bluebells come
Almost before the blackbird finds a mate
  And overstay the swallow, and the hum
Of many murmuring bees flits through the leaves, —
Have I lain poring on the dreamy tales his fancy weaves,

And through their unreal woes and mimic pain
  Wept for myself, and so was purified,
And in their simple mirth grew glad again;
  For as I sailed upon that pictured tide,
The strength and splendor of the storm was mine,
Without the storm's red ruin, — for the singer is divine:

The little laugh of water falling down
  Is not so musical; the clammy gold,
Close hoarded in the tiny waxen town,
  Has less of sweetness in it; and the old
Half-withered reeds that waved in Arcady,
Touched by his lips, break forth again to fresher harmony.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE.

"Three gables, great and fair,
That slender rods of columns do upbear
Over the minster doors." — Page 145.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE.

Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
Or hope again for aught that I can say,
The idle singer of an empty day.

But rather, when aweary of your mirth,
From full hearts still unsatisfied ye sigh,
And, feeling kindly unto all the earth,
Grudge every minute as it passes by,
Made the more mindful that the sweet days die, —
Remember me a little then, I pray,
The idle singer of an empty day.

The heavy trouble, the bewildering care
That weighs us down who live and earn our bread,
These idle verses have no power to bear;
So let me sing of names remembered,
Because they, living not, can ne'er be dead,
Or long time take their memory quite away
From us poor singers of an empty day.

Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?
Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,
Telling a tale not too importunate
To those who in the sleepy region stay,
Lulled by the singer of an empty day.

Folk say, a wizard to a northern king
At Christmas-tide such wondrous things did show,
That through one window men beheld the spring,
And through another saw the summer glow,
And through a third the fruited vines arow,
While still, unheard, but in its wonted way,
Piped the drear wind of that December day.

So with this Earthly Paradise it is,
If ye will read aright and pardon me,
Who strive to build a shadowy isle of bliss
Midmost the beating of the steely sea,
Where tossed about all hearts of men must be;
Whose ravening monsters mighty men shall slay,
Not the poor singer of an empty day.

PROLOGUE. — THE WANDERERS.

ARGUMENT.

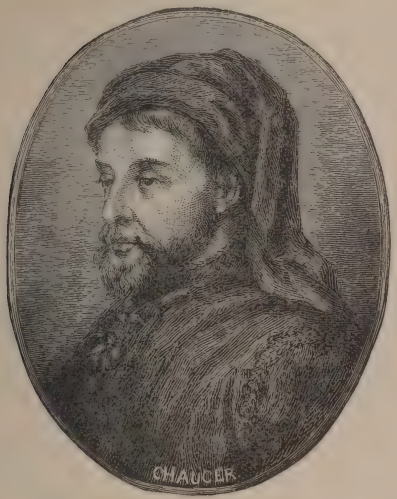
CERTAIN gentlemen and mariners of Norway, having considered all that they had heard of the Earthly Paradise, set sail to find it, and after many troubles and the lapse of many years came old men to some Western land, of which they had never before heard: there they died, when they had dwelt there certain years, much honored of the strange people.

FORGET six counties overhung with smoke,
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,
And dream of London, small, and white, and clean,
The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green;
Think that below bridge the green lapping waves
Smite some few keels that bear Levantine staves
Cut from the yew wood on the burnt-up hill,
And pointed jars that Greek hands toiled to fill,
And treasured scanty spice from some far sea,
Florence gold cloth, and Ypres napery,
And cloth of Bruges, and hogsheads of Guienne;
While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey Chaucer's pen
Moves over bills of lading, — mid such times
Shall dwell the hollow puppets of my rhymes.

A nameless city in a distant sea,
White as the changing walls of faërie,
Thronged with much people clad in ancient guise,

I now am fain to set before your eyes ;
There leave the clear green water and the quays,
And pass betwixt its marble palaces,
Until ye come unto the chiefest square ;
A bubbling conduit is set midmost there,
And round about it now the maidens throng,
With jest and laughter, and sweet broken song,
Making but light of labor new begun,
While in their vessels gleams the morning sun.
On one side of the square a temple stands,
Wherein the gods worshipped in ancient lands
Still have their altars ; a great market-place
Upon two other sides fills all the space,
And thence the busy hum of men comes forth ;
But on the cold side looking toward the north
A pillared council-house may you behold,
Within whose porch are images of gold,
Gods of the nations who dwelt anciently
About the borders of the Grecian sea.

Pass now between them, push the brazen door,
And standing on the polished marble floor
Leave all the noises of the square behind ;
Most calm that reverent chamber shall ye find,
Silent at first, but for the noise you made
When on the brazen door your hand you laid
To shut it after you, — but now behold
The city rulers on their thrones of gold,
Clad in most fair attire, and in their hands
Long carven silver-banded ebony wands ;
Then from the daïs drop your eyes and see
Soldiers and peasants standing reverently
Before those elders, round a little band
Who bear such arms as guard the English land,
But battered, rent, and rusted sore, and they,



The men themselves, are shrivelled, bent, and gray ;
And as they lean with pain upon their spears
Their brows seem furrowed deep with more than years ;
For sorrow dulls their heavy sunken eyes,
Bent are they less with time than miseries.

Pondering on them the city graybeards gaze
Through kindly eyes, midst thoughts of other days,
And pity for poor souls, and vague regret
For all the things that might have happened yet,
Until, their wonder gathering to a head,
The wisest man, who long that land has led,
Breaks the deep silence, unto whom again
A wanderer answers. Slowly as in pain,
And with a hollow voice as from a tomb,
At first he tells the story of his doom ;
But as it grows, and once more hopes and fears,

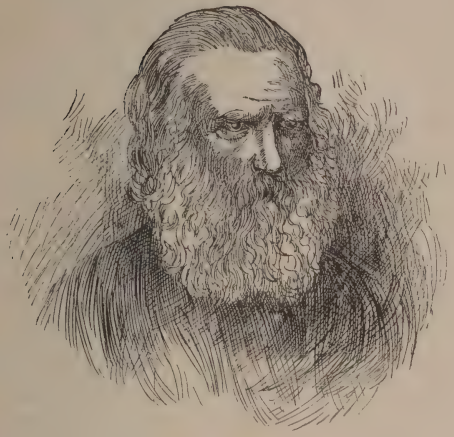
Both measureless, are ringing round his ears,
His eyes grow bright, his seeming days decrease,
For grief once told brings somewhat back of peace.

THE ELDER OF THE CITY.

From what unheard-of world, in what strange keel,
Have ye come hither to our commonweal?
No barbarous race, as these our peasants say,
But learned in memories of a long-past day,
Speaking, some few at least, the ancient tongue
That through the lapse of ages still has clung
To us, the seed of the Ionian race.
Speak out and fear not; if ye need a place
Wherein to pass the end of life away,
That shall ye gain from us from this same day,
Unless the enemies of God ye are;
We fear not you and yours to bear us war,
And scarce can think that ye will try again
Across the perils of the shifting plain
To seek your own land whereso that may be:
For folk of ours, bearing the memory
Of our old land, in days past oft have striven
To reach it, unto none of whom was given
To come again and tell us of the tale;
Therefore our ships are now content to sail
About these happy islands that we know.

THE WANDERER.

Masters, I have to tell a tale of woe,
A tale of folly and of wasted life,
Hope against hope, the bitter dregs of strife,
Ending, where all things end, in death at last:
So if I tell the story of the past,



Let it be worth some little rest, I pray,
A little slumber ere the end of day.

No wonder if the Grecian tongue I know,
Since at Byzantium many a year ago
My father bore the twibil valiantly;
There did he marry, and get me, and die.
And I went back to Norway to my kin,
Long ere this beard ye see did first begin
To shade my mouth, but nathless not before
Among the Greeks I gathered some small lore,
And, standing midst the Væringers, still heard
From this or that man many a wondrous word;
For ye shall know that though we worshipped God,
And heard mass duly, still of Swithiod
The Greater, Odin and his house of gold,
The noble stories ceased not to be told:
These moved me more than words of mine can say

E'en while at Micklegarth my folk did stay;
But when I reached one dying autumn-tide
My uncle's dwelling near the forest side,
And saw the land so scanty and so bare,
And all the hard things men contend with there,
A little and unworthy land it seemed,
And yet the more of Asagard I dreamed,
And worthier seemed the ancient faith of praise.

But now, but now — when one of all those days
Like Lazarus' finger on my heart should be
Breaking the fiery fixed eternity,
But for one moment — could I see once more
The gray-roofed seaport sloping toward the shore,
Or note the brown boats standing in from sea,
Or the great dromond swinging from the quay,
Or in the beech-woods watch the screaming jay
Shoot up betwixt the tall trunks, smooth and gray —
Yea, could I see the days before distress,
When very longing was but happiness!

Within our house there was a Breton squire
Well learned, who failed not to fan the fire
That evermore unholpen burned in me
Strange lands and things beyond belief to see.
Much lore of many lands this Breton knew;
And for one tale I told, he told me two.
He, counting Asagard a new-told thing,
Yet spoke of gardens ever blossoming
Across the western sea, where none grew old,
E'en as the books at Micklegarth had told;
And said moreover that an English knight
Had had the Earthly Paradise in sight,
And heard the songs of those that dwelt therein,
But entered not, being hindered by his sin.

Shortly, so much of this and that he said
That in my heart the sharp barb entered,
And like real life would empty stories seem,
And life from day to day an empty dream.

Another man there was, a Swabian priest,
Who knew the maladies of man and beast,
And what things helped them; he the stone still sought
Whereby base metal into gold is brought,
And strove to gain the precious draught whereby
Men live midst mortal men yet never die.
Tales of the Kaiser Redbeard could he tell,
Who neither went to Heaven nor yet to Hell,
When from that fight upon the Asian plain
He vanished, but still lives to come again
Men know not how or when; but I listening
Unto this tale thought it a certain thing
That in some hidden vale of Swithiod
Across the golden pavement still he trod.

But while our longing for such things so grew,
And ever more and more we deemed them true,
Upon the land a pestilence there fell
Unheard of yet in any chronicle;
And, as the people died full fast of it,
With these two men it chanced me once to sit,
This learned squire whose name was Nicholas,
And Swabian Laurence, as our manner was;
For could we help it scarcely did we part
From dawn to dusk: so heavy, sad at heart,
We from the castle-yard beheld the bay
Upon that ne'er-to-be-forgotten day;
Little we said amidst that dreary mood,
And certes naught that we could say was good.

It was a bright September afternoon,
The parched-up beech-trees would be yellowing soon;

The yellow flowers grown deeper with the sun
Were letting fall their petals one by one;
No wind there was, a haze was gathering o'er
The furthest bound of the faint yellow shore;
And in the oily waters of the bay
Scarce moving aught some fisher-cobles lay,
And all seemed peace; and had been peace indeed
But that we young men of our life had need,
And to our listening ears a sound was borne
That made the sunlight wretched and forlorn, —
The heavy tolling of the minster bell, —
And nigher yet a tinkling sound did tell
That through the streets they bore our Saviour Christ
By dying lips in anguish to be kissed.

At last spoke Nicholas: 'How long shall we
Abide here, looking forth into the sea
Expecting when our turn shall come to die?
Fair fellows, will ye come with me and try
Now at our worst that long-desired quest,
Now — when our worst is death, and life our best?'
'Nay, but thou know'st,' I said, 'that I but wait
The coming of some man, the turn of fate,
To make this voyage, — but I die meanwhile,
For I am poor, though my blood be not vile,
Nor yet for all his lore doth Laurence hold
Within his crucibles aught like to gold;
And what hast thou, whose father, driven forth
By Charles of Blois, found shelter in the North?
But little riches as I needs must deem.'
'Well,' said he, 'things are better than they seem,
For 'neath my bed an iron chest I have
That holdeth things I have made shift to save
E'en for this end; moreover, hark to this!
In the next firth a fair long ship there is
Well victualled, ready even now for sea,
And I may say it 'longeth unto me;

Since Marcus Erling, late its owner, lies
Dead at the end of many miseries,
And little Kirstin, as thou well mayst know,
Would be content throughout the world to go
If I but took her hand, and now still more
Hath heart to leave this poor death-stricken shore.
Therefore my gold shall buy us Bordeaux swords
And Bordeaux wine as we go oceanwards.
'What say ye, will ye go with me to-night,
Setting your faces to undreamed delight,
Turning your backs unto this troublous hell,
Or is the time too short to say farewell?'

'Not so,' I said; 'rather would I depart
Now while thou speakest, never has my heart
Been set on anything within this land.'
Then said the Swabian: 'Let us now take hand
And swear to follow evermore this quest,
Till death or life have set our hearts at rest.'

So with joined hands we swore, and Nicholas said:
'To-night, fair friends, be ye apparelled
To leave this land, bring all the arms ye can
And such men as ye trust; my own good man
Guards the small postern looking toward Saint Bride,
And good it were ye should not be espied,
Since mayhap freely ye should not go hence,
Thou Rolf in special, for this pestilence
Makes all men hard and cruel, nor are they
Willing that folk should 'scape if they must stay:
Be wise; I bid you for a while farewell.
Leave ye this stronghold when Saint Peter's bell
Strikes midnight, all will surely then be still,
And I will bide you at King Tryggve's hill
Outside the city gates.'

Each went his way
Therewith, and I the remnant of that day
Gained for the quest three men that I deemed true,
And did such other things as I must do,
And still was ever listening for the chime
Half maddened by the lazy lapse of time, —
Yea, scarce I thought indeed that I should live
Till the great tower the joyful sound should give
That set us free ; and so the hours went past,
Till startled by the echoing clang at last
That told of midnight, armed from head to heel
Down to the open postern did I steal,
Bearing small wealth, — this sword that yet hangs here
Worn thin and narrow with so many a year ;
My father's axe that from Byzantium,
With some few gems my pouch yet held, had come ;
Naught else that shone with silver or with gold.
But by the postern gate could I behold
Laurence the priest all armed as if for war,
And my three men were standing not right far
From off the town-wall, having some small store
Of arms and furs and raiment : then once more
I turned, and saw the autumn moonlight fall
Upon the new-built bastions of the wall,
Strange with black shadow and gray flood of light,
And further off I saw the lead shine bright
On tower and turret-roof against the sky,
And looking down I saw the old town lie
Black in the shade of the o'erhanging hill,
Stricken with death, and dreary, but all still
Until it reached the water of the bay,
That in the dead night smote against the quay
Not all unheard, though there was little wind.
But as I turned to leave the place behind,
The wind's light sound, the slowly falling swell,

Were hushed at once by that shrill-tinkling bell,
That, in that stillness jarring on mine ears,
With sudden jangle checked the rising tears,
And now the freshness of the open sea
Seemed ease and joy and very life to me.

So greeting my new mates with little sound,
We made good haste to reach King Tryggve's mound,
And there the Breton Nicholas beheld,
Who by the hand fair Kirstin Erling held,
And round about them twenty men there stood,
Of whom the more part on the holy rood
Were sworn till death to follow up the quest,
And Kirstin was the mistress of the rest.

Again betwixt us was there little speech,
But swiftly did we set on toward the beach,
And coming there our keel, the Fighting Man,
We boarded, and the long oars out we ran,
And swept from out the firth, and sped so well
That scarcely could we hear St. Peter's bell
Toll one, although the light wind blew from land;
Then hoisting sail southward we 'gan to stand,
And much I joyed beneath the moon to see
The lessening land that might have been to me
A kindly giver of wife, child, and friend,
And happy life, or at the worser end
A quiet grave till doomsday rend the earth.

Night passed, day dawned, and we grew full of mirth
As with the ever-rising morning wind
Still farther lay our threatened death behind,
Or so we thought: some eighty men we were,
Of whom but fifty knew the shipman's gear,
The rest were uplanders; midst such of these
As knew not of our quest, with promises
Went Nicholas dealing florins round about,

With still a fresh tale for each new man's doubt,
Till all were fairly won or seemed to be
To that strange desperate voyage o'er the sea.

Now, if ye ask me from what land I come
With all my folly, — Viken is my home,
Where Tryggve Olaf's son and Olaf's sire
Lit to the ancient Gods the sacred fire,
Unto whose line am I myself akin,
Through him who Astrid in old time did win,
King Olaf's widow: let all that go by,
Since I was born at least to misery.

Now Nicholas came to Laurence and to me
To talk of what he deemed our course should be,
To whom agape I listened, since I knew
Naught but old tales, nor aught of false and true
Amid these, for but one kind seemed to be
The Vineland voyage o'er the unknown sea
And Swegder's search for Godheim, when he found
The entrance to a new world underground;
But Nicholas o'er many books had pored,
And this and that thing in his mind had stored,
And idle tales from true report he knew. —
Would he were living now, to tell to you
This story that my feeble lips must tell!
Now, he indeed of Vineland knew full well,
Both from my tales where truth perchance touched lies,
And from the ancient written histories;
But now he said: 'The land was good enow
That Leif the son of Eric came unto,
But this was not our world, nay, scarce could be
The door into a place so heavenly
As that we seek, therefore my rede is this,
That we to gain that sure abode of bliss
Risk dying in an unknown landless sea;

Although full certainly it seems to me
All that we long for there we needs must find.
'Therefore, O friends, if ye are of my mind,
When we are past the French and English strait
Let us seek news of that desired gate
To immortality and blessed rest
Within the landless waters of the west,
But still a little to the southward steer.
Certes no Greenland winter waits us there,
No year-long night, but rather we shall find
Spice-trees set waving by the western wind,
And gentle folk who know no guile at least,
And many a bright-winged bird and soft-skinned beast,
For gently must the year upon them fall.
'Now, since the Fighting Man is over small
To hold the mighty stores that we shall need,
To turn as now to Bremen is my rede,
And there to buy a new keel with my gold,
And fill her with such things as she may hold;
And thou thenceforward, Rolf, her lord shalt be,
Since thou art not unskilled upon the sea.'

But unto me most fair his saying seemed,
For of a land unknown to all I dreamed,
And certainly by some warm sea I thought
That we the soonest thereto should be brought.
Therefore with mirth enow passed every day
Till in the Weser stream at last we lay
Hearkening the bells of Bremen ring to mass,
For on a Sunday morn our coming was.
There in a while to chaffer did we fall,
And of the merchants bought a dromond tall
They called the Rose-Garland, and her we stored
With such-like victuals as we well might hoard,
And arms and raiment; also there we gained

Some few men more by stories true and feigned,
And by that time, now needing naught at all,
We weighed, well armed, with good hope not to fall
Into the hands of rovers of the sea,
Since at that time had we heard certainly
Edward of England drew all men to him,
And that his fleet held whatso keel could swim
From Jutland to Land's End: for all that, we
Thought it but wise to keep the open sea
And give to warring lands a full wide berth;
Since unto all of us our lives seemed worth
A better purchase than they erst had been.

So it befell that we no sail had seen
Till the sixth day at morn, when we drew near
The land at last and saw the French coast clear, —
The high land over Guines our pilot said.
There at the daybreak, we, apparelled
Like merchant ships in seeming, now perforce
Must meet a navy drawing thwart our course,
Whose sails and painted hulls not far away
Rolled slowly o'er the leaden sea and gray,
Beneath the night-clouds by no sun yet cleared;
But we with anxious hearts this navy neared,
For we sailed deep and heavy, and to fly
Would naught avail since we were drawn so nigh,
And, fighting, must we meet but certain death.
Soon with amazement did I hold my breath
As from the wide bows of the Rose-Garland,
I saw the sun, new risen o'er the land,
Light up the shield-hung side of keel on keel,
Their sails like knights' coats, and the points of steel
Glittering from waist and castle and high top.
And well indeed awhile my heart might stop,
As heading all the crowded van I saw,

Huge, swelling out without a crease or flaw,
A sail where, on the quartered blue and red,
In silk and gold right well apparelled,
The lilies gleamed, the thin gaunt leopards glared
Out toward the land where even now there flared
The dying beacons. Ah, with such an one
Could I from town to town of France have run
To end my life upon some glorious day
Where stand the banners brighter than the May
Above the deeds of men, as certainly
This king himself has full oft wished to die.
And who knows now beneath what field he lies,
Amidst what mighty bones of enemies?
Ah, surely it had been a glorious thing
From such a field to lead forth such a king,
That he might live again with happy days,
And more than ever win the people's praise!
Nor had it been an evil lot to stand
On the worse side, with people of the land
'Gainst such a man, when even this might fall,
That it might be my luck some day to call
My battle-cry o'er his low lying head,
And I be evermore remembered.
Well as we neared and neared, such thoughts I had,
Whereby perchance I was the less a-drad
Of what might come, and at the worst we deemed
They would not scorn our swords; but as I dreamed
Of fair towns won and desperate feats of war,
And my old follies now were driven afar
By that most glorious sight, a loud halloo
Came down the wind, and one by me who knew
The English tongue cried that they bade us run
Close up and board, nor was there any one
Who durst say nay to that, so presently
Both keels were underneath the big ship's lee;

While Nicholas and I together passed
Betwixt the crowd of archers by the mast
Unto the poop, where 'neath his canopy
The king sat, eying us as we drew nigh.

Broad-browed he was, hook-nosed, with wide gray eyes
No longer eager for the coming prize,
But keen and steadfast; many an ageing line,
Half hidden by his sweeping beard and fine,
Ploughed his thin cheeks; his hair was more than gray,
And like to one he seemed whose better day
Is over to himself, though foolish fame
Shouts louder year by year his empty name.
Unarmed he was, nor clad upon that morn
Much like a king; an ivory hunting-horn
Was slung about him, rich with gems and gold,
And a great white gerfalcon did he hold
Upon his fist: before his feet there sat
A scrivener making notes of this or that
As the king bade him, and behind his chair
His captains stood in armor rich and fair;
And by his side, unhelmed but armed, stood one
I deemed none other than the prince his son;
For in a coat of England was he clad,
And on his head a coronel he had.
Tall was he, slim, made apt for feats of war,
A splendid lord; yea, he seemed prouder far
Than was his sire, yet his eyes therewithal
With languid careless glance seemed wont to fall
On things about, as though he deemed that naught
Could fail unbidden to do all his thought.
But close by him stood a war-beaten knight,
Whose coat of war bore on a field of white
A sharp red pile, and he of all men there
Methought would be the one that I should fear
If I led men.

But midst my thoughts I heard
The king's voice as the high seat now we neared,
And knew his speech because in French it was,
That erewhile I had learnt of Nicholas.
'Fair sirs, what are ye? for on this one day,
I rule the narrow seas mine ancient way.
Me seemeth in the highest bark I know
The Flemish handiwork, but yet ye show
Unlike to merchants, though your ships are deep
And slowly through the water do ye creep;
And thou, fair sir, seem'st journeying from the north
With peltries Bordeaux-ward? Nay, then, go forth,
Thou wilt not harm us: yet if ye be men
Well-born and warlike, these are fair days, when
The good heart wins more than the merchant keeps,
And safest still in steel the young head sleeps;
And here are banners thou mayest stand beneath
And not be shamed either in life or death —

What, man, thou reddenest! wouldst thou say me no,
If underneath my banner thou shouldst go?
Nay, thou mayest speak, or let thy fellow say
What he is stuffed with, be it yea or nay.'
For as he spoke my fellow gazed on me
With something like to fear, and hurriedly
As I bent forward, thrust me on one side,
And scarce the king's last word would he abide,
But 'gan to say: 'Sire, from the north we come,
Though as for me far nigher is my home.
Thy foes, my lord, drove out my kin and me,
Ere yet thine armed hand was upon the sea;
Chandos shall surely know my father's name,
Loys of Dinan, which ill-luck, sword, and flame,
Lord Charles of Blois, the French king, and the pest
In this and that land now have laid to rest,
Except for me alone. And now, my lord,
If I shall seem to speak an idle word
To such as thou art, pardon me therefore;
But we, part taught by ancient books and lore,
And part by what, nor yet so long ago,
This man's own countrymen have come to do,
Have gathered hope to find across the sea
A land where we shall gain felicity
Past tongue of man to tell of; and our life
Is not so sweet here, or so free from strife,
Or glorious deeds so common, that, if we
Should think a certain path at last to see
To such a place, men then could think us wise
To turn away therefrom, and shut our eyes,
Because at many a turning here and there
Swift death might lurk, or unaccustomed fear.
O king, I pray thee in this young man's face
Flash not thy banner, nor with thy frank grace
Tear him from life; but go thy way, let us

Find hidden death, or life more glorious
Than thou durst think of, knowing not the gate
Whereby to flee from that all-shadowing fate.
'O king, since I could walk a yard or twain,
Or utter anything but cries of pain,
Death was before me; yea, on the first morn
That I remember aught, among the corn
I wandered with my nurse, behind us lay
The walls of Vannes, white in the summer day,
The reapers whistled, the brown maidens sung,
As on the wain the topmost sheaf they hung,
The swallow wheeled above high up in air,
And midst the labor all was sweet and fair;
When on the winding road between the fields
I saw a glittering line of spears and shields,
And pleased therewith called out to some one by
E'en as I could; he scarce for fear could cry,
"The French! the French!" and turned and ran his best
Toward the town gates, and we ran with the rest,
I wailing loud who knew not why at all.
But ere we reached the gates my nurse did fall,

I with her, and I wondered much that she
Just as she fell should still lie quietly;
Nor did the colored feathers that I found
Stuck in her side, as frightened I crawled round,
Tell me the tale, though I was sore afeard
At all the cries and wailing that I heard.

'I say, my lord, that arrow-flight now seems
The first thing rising clear from feeble dreams,
And that was death; and the next thing was death,
For through our house all spoke with bated breath
And wore black clothes, withal they came to me
A little child, and did off hastily
My shoon and hosen, and with that I heard
The sound of doleful singing, and afeard
Forbore to question, when I saw the feet
Of all were bare, like mine, as toward the street
We passed, and joined a crowd in such-like guise
Who through the town sang woful litanies,
Pressing the stones with feet unused and soft,
And bearing images of saints aloft,
In hope 'gainst hope to save us from the rage
Of that fell pest, that as an unseen cage
Hemmed France about, and me and such as me
They made partakers of their misery.

'Lo, death again, and if the time served now
Full many another picture could I show
Of death and death, and men who ever strive
Through every misery at least to live.
The priest within the minster preaches it,
And brooding o'er it doth the wise man sit
Letting life's joys go by. Well, blame me then,
If I who love this changing life of men,
And every minute of whose life were bliss
Too great to long for greater, but for this,—
Mock me, who take this death-bound life in hand

And risk the rag to find a happy land,
Where at the worst death is so far away
No man need think of him from day to day,—
Mock me, but let us go, for I am fain
Our restless road, the landless sea, to gain.'

His words nigh made me weep, but while he spoke
I noted how a mocking smile just broke
The thin line of the prince's lips, and he
Who carried the aforenamed armory
Puffed out his wind-beat cheeks and whistled low:
But the king smiled, and said, 'Can it be so?
I know not, and ye twain are such as find
The things whereto old kings must needs be blind.
For you the world is wide,—but not for me,
Who once had dreams of one great victory
Wherein that world lay vanquished by my throne,
And now, the victor in so many an one,
Find that in Asia Alexander died
And will not live again; the world is wide
For you, I say,—for me a narrow space
Betwixt the four walls of a fighting place.
'Poor man, why should I stay thee? live thy fill
Of that fair life wherein thou seest no ill
But fear of that fair rest I hope to win
One day, when I have purged me of my sin.
'Farewell, it yet may hap that I a king
Shall be remembered but by this one thing,
That on the morn before ye crossed the sea
Ye gave and took in common talk with me;
But with this ring keep memory of the morn,
O Breton, and thou Northman, by this horn
Remember me, who am of Odin's blood,
As heralds say: moreover, it were good
Ye had some lines of writing 'neath my seal,

Or ye might find it somewhat hard to deal
With some of mine, who pass not for a word
Whate'er they deem may hold a hostile sword.'

So, as we kneeled this royal man to thank,
A clerk brought forth two passes sealed and blank,
And when we had them, with the horn and ring,
With few words did we leave the noble king;
And as adown the gangway steps we passed,
We saw the yards swing creaking round the mast,
And heard the shipman's ho, for one by one
The van, outsailed before, by him had run
E'en as he stayed for us, and now indeed
Of his main battle must he take good heed:
But as from off the mighty side we pushed,
And in between us the green water rushed,
I heard his scalds strike up triumphantly
Some song that told not of the weary sea,
But rather of the mead and fair greenwood;
And as we leaned o'er to the wind, I stood
And saw the bright sails leave us, and soon lost
The pensive music by the strong wind tossed
From wave to wave, then turning I espied
Glittering and white upon the weather side
The land he came from, o'er the bright green sea,
Scarce duller than the land upon our lee,
For now the clouds had fled before the sun,
And the bright autumn day was well begun.
Then I cried out for music too, and heard
The minstrels sing some well-remembered word,
And while they sung, before me still I gazed,
Silent with thought of many things, and mazed
With many longings; when I looked again
To see those lands, naught but the restless plain

With some far-off small fisher-boat was left ;
A little hour forevermore had reft
The sight of Europe from my helpless eyes,
And crowned my store of hapless memories.

THE ELDER OF THE CITY.

Sit, friends, and tell your tale which seems to us
Shall be a strange tale and a piteous,
Nor shall it lack our pity for its woe,
Nor ye due thanks for all the things ye show
Of kingdoms nigh forgot that once were great,
And small lands come to glorious estate.
But, sirs, ye faint, behold these maidens stand
Bearing the blood of this our sunburnt land
In well-wrought cups, — drink now of this, that while
Ye poor folk wandered, hid from fortune's smile,
Abode your coming, hidden none the less
Below the earth from summer's happiness.

THE WANDERERS.

Fair sirs, we thank you, hoping we have come
Through many wanderings to a quiet home
Befitting dying men — Good health and peace
To you and to this land, and fair increase
Of everything that ye can wish to have !

But to my tale : A fair southeast wind drave
Our ships for ten days more, and ever we
Sailed mile for mile together steadily ;
But the tenth day I saw the Fighting Man
Brought up to wait me, and when nigh I ran
Her captain hailed me, saying that he thought
That we too far to northward had been brought,
And we must do our southing while we could.
So as his will to me was ever good

In such-like things, we changed our course straightway,
And as we might till the eleventh day
Stretched somewhat south, then baffling grew the wind;
But as we still were ignorant and blind,
Nor knew our port, we sailed on helplessly
O'er a smooth sea, beneath a lovely sky,
And westward ever, but no signs of land
All through these days we saw on either hand,
Nor indeed hoped to see, because we knew
Some watery desert we must journey through,
That had been huge enough to keep all men
From gaining that we sought for until then.

Yet when I grew downcast, I did not fail
To call to mind, how from our land set sail
A certain man, and, after he had passed
Through many unknown seas, did reach at last
A rocky island's shore one foggy day,
And while a little off the land he lay
As in a dream he heard the folk call out
In his own tongue, but mazed and all in doubt
He turned therefrom, and afterwards in strife
With winds and waters, much of precious life
He wasted utterly, for when again
He reached his port after long months of pain,
Unto Biarmeland he chanced to go,
And there the isle he left so long ago
He knew at once, where many Northmen were.
And such a fate I could not choose but fear
For us sometimes; and sometimes when at night
Beneath the moon I watched the foam fly white
From off our bows, and thought how weak and small
Showed the Rose-Garland's mast that looked so tall
Beside the quays of Bremen; when I saw
With measured steps the watch on toward me draw,

And in the moon the helmsman's peering face,
And 'twixt the cordage strained across my place
Beheld the white sail of the Fighting Man
Lead down the pathway of the moonlight wan, —
Then when the ocean seemed so measureless
The very sky itself might well be less,
When midst the changeless piping of the wind,
The intertwined slow waves pressed on behind,
Rolled o'er our wake and made it naught again,
Then would it seem an ill thing and a vain
To leave the hopeful world that we had known,
When all was o'er, hopeless to die alone
Within this changeless world of waters gray.
But hope would come back to me with the day;
The talk of men, the viol's quivering strings,
Would bring my heart to think of better things.
Nor were our folk down-hearted through all this;
For partly with the hope of that vague bliss
Were they made happy, partly the soft air
And idle days wherethrough we then did fare
Were joy enow to rude seafaring folk.

But this our ease at last a tempest broke,
And we must scud before it helplessly,
Fearing each moment lest some climbing sea
Should topple o'er our poop and end us there.
Nathless we 'scaped, and still the wind blew fair
For what we deemed was our right course; but when,
On the third eve, we, as delivered men,
Took breath because the gale was now blown out,
And from our rolling deck we looked about
Over the ridges of the dark gray seas,
And saw the sun, setting in golden ease,
Smile out at last from out the just-cleared sky
Over the ocean's weltering misery,

Still nothing of the Fighting Man we saw,
Which last was seen when the first gusty flaw
Smote them and us; but nothing would avail
To mend the thing, so onward did we sail,
But slowly, through the moonlit night and fair,
With all sails set that we could hoist in air,
And rolling heavily at first, for still
Each wave came on a glittering rippled hill,
And, lifting us aloft, showed from its height
The waste of waves, and then to lightless night
Dropped us adown, and much ado had we
To ride unspilt the wallow of the sea.

But the sun rose up in a cloudless sky,
And from the east the wind blew cheerily,
And southwest still we steered; till on a day
As nigh the mast deep in dull thoughts I lay,
I heard a shout, and turning could I see
One of the shipmen hurrying fast to me,
With something in his hand, who cast adown
Close to my hand a mass of seaweed brown
Without more words; then knew I certainly
The wrack, that oft before I had seen lie
In sandy bights of Norway, and that eve
Just as the sun the ridgy sea would leave,
Shore birds we saw, that flew so nigh, we heard
Their hoarse loud voice that seemed a heavenly word.

Then all were glad, but I a fool and young
Slept not that night, but walked the deck and sung
Snatches of songs, and verily I think
I thought next morn of some fresh stream to drink.
What say I? next morn did I think to be
Set in my godless fair eternity.

Sirs, ye are old, and ye have seen perchance
Some little child for very gladness dance

Over a scarcely noticed worthless thing,
Worth more to him than ransom of a king,
Did not a pang of more than pity take
Your heart thereat, not for the youngling's sake,
But for your own, for man that passes by,
So like to God, so like the beasts that die. —
Lo, sirs, my pity for myself is such,
When, like an image that my hand can touch,
My old self grows unto myself grown old. —
Sirs, I forget my story is not told.

Next morn more wrack we saw, more birds, but still
No land as yet either for good or ill;
But with the light increased the favoring breeze,
And smoothly did we mount the ridgy seas.
Then as anigh the good ship's stern I stood
Gazing adown, a piece of rough-hewn wood
On a wave's crest I saw, and loud I cried,
'Driftwood! driftwood!' and one from by my side,
Maddened with joy, made for the shrouds, and clomb
Up to the top to look on his new home,
For sure he thought the green earth soon to see;
But gazing thence about him, presently
He shouted out, 'A sail astern, a sail!'
Freshening the hope that now had 'gun to fail
Of seeing our fellows with the earth new found;
Wherefore we shortened sail, and, sweeping round
The hazy edges of the sea and sky,
Soon from the deck could see that sail draw nigh,
Half fearful lest she yet might chance to be
The floating house of some strange enemy,
Till on her sail we could at last behold
The ruddy lion with the axe of gold,
And Marcus Erling's sign set cornerwise,
The green, gold-fruited tree of Paradise.
Ah, what a meeting as she drew anigh,

Greeted with ringing shouts and minstrelsy!
Alas, the joyful fever of that day,
When all we met still told of land that lay
Not far ahead! Yet at our joyous feast
A word of warning spoke the Swabian priest
To me and Nicholas, for, 'O friends,' he said,
'Right welcome is the land that lies ahead
To us who cannot turn, and in this air,
Washed by this sea, it cannot but be fair,
And good for us poor men I make no doubt;
Yet, fellows, must I warn you not to shout
Ere we have left the troublous wood behind
Wherein we wander desperate and blind:
Think what may dwell there! Call to mind the tale
We heard last winter o'er the Yule-tide ale,
When that small, withered, black-eyed Genoese
Told of the island in the outer seas
He and his fellows reached upon a tide,
And how, as lying by a streamlet's side,
With ripe fruits ready unto every hand,
They lacked not for fair women of the land,
The devils came and slew them, all but him,
Who, how he scarce knew, made a shift to swim
Off to his ship: nor must ye, fellows, fear
Such things alone, for mayhap men dwell here
Who worship dreadful gods, and sacrifice
Poor travellers to them in such horrid wise
As I have heard of; or let this go by,
Yet we may chance to come to slavery,
Or all our strength and weapons be too poor
To conquer such beasts as the unknown shore
May breed; or set all these ill things aside,
It yet may be our lot to wander wide
Through many lands before at last we come
Unto the gates of our enduring home.'

But what availed such warning unto us
Who, by this change made nigh delirious,
Spake wisdom outward from the teeth, but thought
That in a little hour we should be brought
Unto that bliss our hearts were set upon,
That more than very Heaven we now had won.

Well, the next morn unto our land we came,
And even now my cheeks grow red with shame,
To think what words I said to Nicholas, —
Since on that night in the great ship I was, —
Asking him questions, as if he were God,
Or at the least in that fair land had trod,
And knew it well, and still he answered me
As some great doctor in theology
Might his poor scholar, asking him of heaven.
But unto me next morn the grace was given
To see land first, and when men certainly
That blessed sight of all sights could descry,
All hearts were melted, and with happy tears,
Born of the death of all our doubts and fears,
Yea, with loud weeping, each did each embrace
For joy that we had gained the glorious place.
Then must the minstrels sing, then must they play
Some joyous strain to welcome in the day,
But for hot tears could see nor bow nor string,
Nor for the rising sobs make shift to sing ;
Yea, some of us in that first ecstasy
For joy of 'scaping death went near to die.
Then might be seen how hard is this world's lot
When such a marvel was our grief forgot,
And what a thing the world's joy is to bear,
When on our hearts the broken bonds of care
Had left such scars, no man of us could say
The burning words upon his lips that lay ;

Since, trained to hide the depths of misery,
Amidst that joy no more our tongues were free.
Ah, then it was indeed when first I knew,
When all our wildest dreams seemed coming true,
And we had reached the gates of Paradise
And endless bliss, at what unmeasured price
Man sets his life, and, drawing happy breath,
I shuddered at the once familiar death.
Alas, the happy day! the foolish day!
Alas, the sweet time, too soon passed away!

Well, in a while I gained the Rose-Garland,
And as toward shore we steadily did stand
With all sail set, the wind, which had been light,
Since the beginning of the just past night,
Failed utterly, and the sharp ripple slept;
Then, toiling hard, forward our keels we swept,
Making small way, until night fell again,
And then, although of landing we were fain,
Needs must we wait; but when the sun was set
Then the cool night a light air did beget,
And 'neath the stars slowly we moved along,
And found ourselves within a current strong
At daybreak, and the land beneath our lee.
There a long line of breakers could we see,
That on a yellow sandy beach did fall,
And then a belt of grass, and then a wall
Of green trees, rising dark against the sky.
Not long we looked, but anchored presently
A furlong from the shore, and then, all armed,
Into the boats the most part of us swarmed,
And pulled with eager hands unto the beach;
But when the seething surf our prow did reach,
From off the bows I leapt into the sea
Waist-deep, and, wading, was the first to be

Upon that land; then to the flowers I ran,
And cried aloud like to a drunken man
Words without meaning, whereof none took heed,
For all across the yellow beach made speed
To roll among the fair flowers and the grass.
But when our folly somewhat tempered was,
And we could talk like men, we thought it good
To try if we could pierce the thick black wood,
And see what men might dwell in that new land;
But when we entered it, on either hand
Uprose the trunks, with underwood intwined,
Making one thicket, thorny, dense, and blind;
Where with our axes, laboring half the day,
We scarcely made some half a rod of way.
Therefore, we left that place and tried again,
Yea, many times, but yet was all in vain;
So to the ships we went, when we had been
A long way in our arms, nor yet had seen
A sign of man, but as for living things,
Gay birds with many-colored crests and wings,
Conies anigh the beach, and while we hacked
Within the wood, gray serpents, yellow-backed,
And monstrous lizards; yea, and one man said
That midst the thorns he saw a dragon's head;
And keeping still his eyes on it he felt
For a stout shaft he had within his belt;
But just as he had got it to the string
And drawn his hand aback, the loathly thing
Vanished away, and how he could not tell.

Now, spite of all, little our courage fell,
For this day's work, nay rather, all things seemed
To show that we no foolish dream had dreamed, —
The pathless, fearful sea, the land that lay
So strange, so hard to find, so far away,

The lovely summer air, the while we knew
That unto winter now at home it grew,
The flowery shore, the dragon-guarded wood,
So hard to pierce, — each one of these made good
The foolish hope that led us from our home,
That we to utter misery might come.

Now, next morn when the tide began to flow,
We weighed, and somewhat northward did we go,
Coasting that land, and every now and then
We went ashore to try the woods again ;
But little change we found in them, until
Inland we saw a bare and scarped white hill
Rise o'er their tops, and going further on
Unto a broad green river's mouth we won,
And entering there ran up it with the flood,
For it was deep although 'twixt walls of wood
Darkly enough its shaded stream did flow,
And high trees hid the hill we saw just now.
So as we peered about from side to side
A path upon the right bank we espied
Through the thick wood, and mooring hastily
Our ships unto the trunks of trees thereby,
Laurence and I with sixty men took land,
With bow or cutting sword or bill in hand,
And bearing food to last till the third day ;
But with the others there did Nicholas stay
To guard the ships, with whom was Kirstin still,
Who now seemed pining for old things and ill,
Spite of the sea-breeze and the lovely air.
But as for us, we followed up with care
A winding path, looking from left to right
Lest any deadly thing should come in sight ;
And certainly our path a dragon crossed
That in the thicket presently we lost ;

And some men said a leopard they espied,
And further on we heard a beast that cried;
Serpents we saw, like those we erst had seen,
And many-colored birds, and lizards green,
And apes that chattered from amidst the trees.
So on we went until a dying breeze
We felt upon our faces, and soon grew
The forest thinner, till at last we knew
The great scarped hill, which if we now could scale
For sight of much far country would avail;
But coming there we climbed it easily,

For though escarped and rough toward the sea,
The beaten path we followed led us round
To where a soft and grassy slope we found,
And there it forked, one arm led up the hill,
Another through the forest wound on still;
Which last we left, in good hope soon to see
Some signs of man, which happened presently;
For two-thirds up the hill we reached a space
Levelled by man's hand in the mountain's face,
And there a rude shrine stood, of unhewn stones
Both walls and roof, with a great heap of bones
Piled up outside it: there awhile we stood
In doubt, for something there made cold our blood,
Till brother Laurence, with a whispered word,
Crossed himself thrice, and drawing forth his sword
Entered alone, but therewith presently
From the inside called out aloud to me
To follow, so I, trembling, yet went in
To that abode of unknown monstrous sin,
And others followed: therein could we see,
Amidst the gloom by peering steadily,
An altar of rough stones, and over it
We saw a god of yellow metal sit,
A cubit long, which Laurence with his tongue
Had touched and found pure gold; withal there hung
Against the wall men's bodies brown and dry,
Which gaudy rags of raiment wretchedly
Did wrap about, and all their heads were wreathed
With golden chaplets; and meanwhile we breathed
A heavy, faint, and sweet spice-laden air,
As though that incense late were scattered there.
But from that house of devils soon we passed
Trembling and pale, Laurence the priest the last,
And got away in haste, nor durst we take
Those golden chaplets for their wearers' sake,

Or that grim golden devil whose they were ;
Yet for the rest, although they brought us fear,
They did but seem to show our heaven anigh,
Because we deemed these might have come to die
In seeking it, being slain for fatal sin.
And now we set ourselves in haste to win
Up to that mountain's top, and on the way
Looked backward oft upon the land that lay
Beneath the hill, and still on every hand
The forest seemed to cover all the land,
But that some four leagues off we saw a space
Cleared of the trees, and in that open place

Houses we seemed to see, and rising smoke
That told where dwelt the unknown, unseen folk.
But when at last the utmost top we won
A dismal sight our eyes must look upon:
The mountain's summit, levelled by man's art,
Was hedged by high stones set some yard apart
All round a smooth paved space, and midst of these
We saw a group of well-wrought images,
Or so they seemed at first, who stood around
An old hoar man laid on the rocky ground
Who seemed to live as yet; now drawing near
We saw indeed what things these figures were:
Dead corpses, by some deft embalmer dried,
And on this mountain after they had died
Set up like players on a Yule-tide feast;
Here stood a hunter, with a spotted beast
Most like a leopard, writhing up his spear;
Nigh the old man stood one as if drawn near
To give him drink, and on each side his head
Two damsels daintily apparelled;
And then again, nigh him who bore the cup,
Were two who 'twixt them bore a litter up
As though upon a journey he should go,
And round about stood men with spear and bow
And painted targets, as the guard to all,
Headed by one beyond man's stature tall,
Who, half turned round, as though he gave the word,
Seemed as he once had been a mighty lord.
But the live man amid the corpses laid,
Turning from side to side, some faint word said
Now and again, but kept his eyes shut fast;
And we, when from the green slope we had passed
On to this dreadful stage, awe-struck and scared,
Awhile upon the ghastly puppets stared,
Then trembling, with drawn swords, came close anigh

To where the hapless ancient man did lie,
Who at the noise we made now oped his eyes
And fixing them upon us did uprise,
And with a fearful scream stretched out his hand,
While upright on his head his hair did stand
For very terror, while we none the less
Were rooted to the ground for fearfulness,
And scarce our weapons could make shift to hold.
But as we stood and gazed, over he rolled
Like a death-stricken bull, and there he lay,
With his long-hoarded life quite passed away.
Then in our hearts did wonder conquer fear,
And to the dead men did we draw anear,
And found them such-like things as I have said;
But he, their master, was apparelled
Like to those others that we saw e'en now
Hung up within the dreary house below.
Right little courage had we there to stay,
So down the hill again we took our way,
When looking landward thence we had but seen,
All round about, the forest dull and green,
Pierced by the river where our ships we left,
And bounded by far-off blue mountains, cleft
By passes here and there; but we went by
The chapel of the gold god silently,
For doubts had risen in our hearts at last
If yet the bitterness of death were past.
But having come again into the wood,
We there took counsel whether it were good
To turn back to the ships, or push on still
Till we had reached the place that from the hill
We had beheld; and since the last seemed best
Onward we marched, scarce staying to take rest
And eat some food, for feverish did we grow
For haste the best or worst of all to know.

Along the path that, as I said before,
Led from the hill, we went, and labored sore
To gain the open ere the night should fall;
But yet in vain, for, like a dreary pall
Cast o'er the world, the darkness hemmed us in,
And though we struggled desperately to win
From out the forest through the very night,
Yet did that labor so abate our might,
We thought it good to rest among the trees,
Nor come on those who might be enemies
In the thick darkness, neither did we dare
To light a fire lest folk should slay us there
Mazed and defenceless: so the one half slept
As they might do, the while the others kept
Good guard in turn; and as we watched we heard
Sounds that might well have made bold men afeard
And cowards die of fear, but we, alone,
Apart from all, such desperate men were grown,
If we should fail to win our Paradise,
That common life we now might well despise.
So by the daybreak on our way we were,
When we had seen to all our fighting gear;
And soon we came unto that open space,
And here and there about a grassy place
Saw houses scattered, neither great nor fair,
For they were framed of trees as they grew there,
And walled with wattle-work from tree to tree;
And thereabout beasts unknown did we see,
Four-footed, tame; and soon a man came out
From the first house, and with a startled shout
Took to his heels, and soon from far and near
The folk swarmed out, and still as in great fear
Gave us no second look, but ran their best,
And they being clad but lightly for the rest,
To follow them seemed little mastery.

So to their houses gat we speedily
To see if we might take some loiterer;
And some few feeble folk we did find there,
Though most had fled, and unto these with pain
We made some little of our meaning plain,
And sent an old man forth into the wood
To show his fellows that our will was good.
Who going from us came back presently,
His message done, and with him two or three,
The boldest of his folk, and they in turn
A little of us by our signs did learn,
Then went their way: and so at last all fear
Was laid aside, and thronging they drew near
To look upon us; and at last came one
Who had upon his breast a golden sun,
And in strange glittering gay attire was clad.
He let us know our coming made him glad,
And bade us come with him; so thereon we,
Thinking him some one in authority,
Rose up and followed him, who with glad face
Led us through closer streets of that strange place,
And brought us lastly to a shapely hall
Round and high-roofed, held up with tree-trunks tall;
And midst his lords the barbarous king sat there,
Gold-crowned, in strange apparel rich and fair,
Whereat we shuddered, for we saw that he
Was clad like him that erewhile we did see
Upon the hill, and like those other ones
Hung in the dismal shrine of unhewn stones.
Yet naught of evil did he seem to think,
But bade us sit by him and eat and drink;
So eating did we speak by signs meanwhile
Each unto each, and they would laugh and smile
As folk well pleased; and with them all that day
Well feasted, learning some things, did we stay.

And sure of all the folk I ever saw
These were the gentlest: if they had a law
We knew not then, but still they seemed to be
Like the gold people of antiquity.
Now, when we tried to ask for that good land,
Eastward and seaward did they point the hand;
Yet if they knew what thing we meant thereby
We knew not; but when we for our reply
Said that we came thence, they made signs to say
They knew it well, and kneeling down they lay
Before our feet, as people worshipping.
But we, though somewhat troubled at this thing,
Failed not to hope, because it seemed to us
That this so simple folk and virtuous,
So happy midst their dreary forest bowers,
Showed at the least a better land than ours,
And some yet better thing far onward lay.
Amidst all this we made a shift to pray
That some of them would go with us, to be
Our fellows on the perilous green sea,
And much did they rejoice when this they knew,
And straightway midst their young men lots they drew,
And the next morn of these they gave us ten,
And wept at our departing.
Now these men,
Though brown indeed through dint of that hot sun,
Were comely and well-knit, as any one
I saw in Greece, and fit for deeds of war,
Though, as I said, of all men gentlest far;
Their arms were axe and spear, and shield and bow,
But naught of iron did they seem to know,
For all their cutting tools were edged with flint,
Or with soft copper, that soon turned and bent;
With cloths of cotton were their bodies clad,
But other raiment for delight they had

Most fairly woven of some unknown thing;
And all of them from little child to king
Had many ornaments of beaten gold:
Certes, we might have gathered wealth untold
Amongst them, had that then been in our thought,
But none the glittering evil valued aught.

Now of these foresters we learned, that they,
Hemmed by the woods, went seldom a long way
From where we saw them, and no boat they had,
Or much of other people good or bad
They knew, and ever had they little war:
But now and then a folk would come from far
In ships unlike to ours, and for their gold
Would give them goods; and some men over bold
Who dwelt beyond the great hill we had seen,
Had waged them war; but these all slain had been
Among the tangled woods by men who knew
What tracks of beasts the thicket might pierce through.

Such things they told us whom we brought away,
But after this, for certes on that day
Not much we gathered of their way of life.

So to the ships we came at last, and, rife
With many things new learned, we told them all;
And though our courage might begin to fall
A little now, yet each to other we
Made countenance of great felicity,
And spoke as if the prize were wellnigh won.

Behold then, sirs, how fortune led us on,
Little by little till we reached the worst,
And still our lives grew more and more accurst.

THE ELDER OF THE CITY.

Nay, friends, believe your worser life now past,
And that a little bliss is reached at last;

Take heart, therefore, for like a tale so told
Is each man's life: and ye, who have been bold
To see and suffer such unheard-of things,
Henceforth shall be more worshipped than the kings
We hear you name; then, since ye reach this day,
How are ye worse for what has passed away?

THE WANDERER.

Kind folk, what words of ours can give you praise
That fits your kindness? yet for those past days,
If we bemoan our lot, think this at least:
We are as men who cast aside a feast
Amidst their lowly fellows, that they may
Eat with the king, and who at end of day
Bearing sore stripes, with great humility
Must pray the bedesmen of those men to be
They scorned that day while yet the sun was high.

Not long within the river did we lie,
But put to sea intending as before
To coast with watchful eyes the unknown shore,
And strive to pierce the woods: three days we sailed,
And little all our watchfulness availed,
Though all that time the wind was fair enow;
But on the fourth day it began to blow
From off the land, and still increased on us
Until the storm grown wild and furious,
Although at anchor still we strove to ride,
Had blown us out into the ocean wide,
Far out of sight of land; and when at last,
After three days, its fury was o'erpast,
Of all our counsels this one was the best
To beat back blindly to the longed-for west.
Baffling the wind was, toilsome was the way,
Nor did we make land till the thirtieth day,

When both flesh-meat and water were nigh spent ;
But anchoring at last, ashore we went,
And found the land far better than the first.
For this with no thick forest was accurst,
Though here and there were scattered clumps of wood.
The air was cooler, too, but soft and good ;
Fair streams we saw, and herds of goats and deer,
But nothing noisome for a man to fear.
So, since at anchor safe our good ships lay
Within the long horns of a sandy bay,
We thought it good ashore to take our ease,
And pitched our tents anigh some maple-trees
Not far from shore, and there with little pain
Enough of venison quickly did we gain
To feast us all ; and high feast did we hold,
Lighting great fires, for now the nights were cold,
And we were fain a noble roast to eat ;
Nor did we lack for drink to better meat,
For from the dark hold of the Rose-Garland
A well-hooped cask our shipmen brought a-land,
That knew some white-walled city of the Rhine.
There crowned with flowers, and flushed with noble wine,
Hearkening the distant murmur of the main,
And safe upon our promised land again,
What wonder if our vain hopes rose once more,
And Heaven seemed dull beside that twice-won shore !
By midnight in our tents were we asleep,
And little watch that night did any keep,
For as our pleasance that fair land we deemed.
But in my sleep of lovely things I dreamed,
For I was back at Micklegarth once more,
But not a court-man's son there as of yore,
But the Greek king, or so I seemed to be,
Set on the throne whose awe and majesty
Gold lions guard ; before whose moveless feet

A damsel knelt, praying in words so sweet
For what I know not now, that both mine eyes
Grew full of tears, and I must bid her rise
And sit beside me: step by step she came
Up the gold stair, setting my heart aflame
With all her beauty, till she reached the throne
And there sat down; but as, with her alone
In that vast hall, my hand her hand did seek,
And on my face I felt her balmy cheek,
Throughout my heart there shot a dreadful pang,
And down below us, with a sudden clang,
The golden lions rose, and roared aloud,
And in at every door did armed men crowd,
Shouting out death and curses, and I fell
Dreaming indeed that this at last was hell.

But therewithal I woke, and through the night
Heard shrieks and shouts and clamor as of fight,
And snatching up my axe, unarmed beside
Nor scarce awaked, my rallying cry I cried,
And with good haste unto the hubbub went;
But even in the entry of the tent
Some dark mass hid the star-besprinkled sky,
And whistling past my head a spear did fly,
And striking out I saw a naked man
Fall 'neath my blow, nor heeded him, but ran
Unto the captain's tent, for there indeed
I saw my fellows stand at desperate need,
Beset with foes, nor yet armed more than I,
Though on the way I rallied hastily
Some better armed, with whom I straightway fell
Upon the foe, who with a hideous yell
Turned round upon us; but we, desperate
And fresh, and dangerous for our axes' weight,
Fought so that they must needs give back a pace

And yield our fellows some small breathing space ;
Then gathering all together, side by side
We laid our weapons, and our cries we cried
And rushed upon them, who abode no more
Our levelled points, but scattering from the shore
Ran here and there ; but when some two or three
We in the chase had slain right easily,
We held our hands, nor followed more their flight,
Fearing the many chances of the night.
Then did we light our watch-fires up again,
And armed us all, and found three good men slain ;
Ten wounded, among whom was Nicholas,
Though little heedful of these things he was,
For in his tent he sat upon the ground,
Holding fair Kirstin's hand, whom he had found
Dead, with a feathered javelin in her breast.
But taking counsel now, we thought it best
To gather up our goods and get away
Unto the ships, and there to wait the day ;
Nor did we loiter, fearful lest the foe,
Who somewhat now our feebleness must know,
Should come on us with force made manifold,
And all our story quickly should be told.
So to our boats in haste the others gat,
But in his tent, not speaking, Nicholas sat,
Nor moved when o'er his head we struck the tent.
But when all things were ready, then I went
And raised the body up, and silently
Walked with it down the beach unto the sea ;
Then he arose and followed me, and when
He reached at last the now embarking men,
And in a boat my burden I had laid,
He sat beside ; but no word had he said
Since first he knew her slain. Such ending had
The night at whose beginning all were glad.

One wounded man of theirs we brought with us
Hoping for news, but he grew furious
When he awoke aboard from out his swoon,
And tore his wounds, and smote himself, and soon
Died outright, though his hurts were slight enow;
So naught from him of that land could we know.
But now, as we that luckless country scanned,
Just at the daybreak did we see a band
Of these barbarians come with shout and yell
Across the place where all these things befell,
Down to the very edges of the sea;
But though armed now, by day, we easily
Had made a shift no few of them to slay,
It seemed to us the better course to weigh
And try another entry to that land;
So southward with a light wind did we stand,
Not losing sight of shore, and now and then
I led ashore the more part of our men
Well armed, by daylight, and the barbarous folk
Once and again from bushments on us broke,
Whom without loss of men we brushed away.
But in our turn it happed to us one day
Upon a knot of them unwares to come.
These we bore back with us, the most of whom
Would neither eat nor drink, but sullenly
Sat in a corner of the ship to die;
But 'mongst them was a woman, who at last,
Won by the glitter of some toy we cast
About her neck, by soft words and by wine,
Began to answer us by sign to sign;
Of whom we learned not much indeed, but when
We set on shore those tameless savage men,
And would have left her too, she seemed to pray,
For terror of her folk, with us to stay:
Therefore we took her back with us, and she,

Though learning not our tongue too easily,
Unto the forest-folk began to speak.

Now midst all this passed many a weary week,
And we no nigher all the time had come
Unto the portal of our blissful home,
And needs our bright hope somewhat must decay ;
Yet none the less as dull day passed by day,
Still onward by our folly were we led,
And still with lies our wavering hearts we fed.
Happy we were in this, that still the wind
Blew as we wished, and still the air was kind ;
Nor failed we of fresh water as we went
Along the coast, and oft our bows we bent
On beast and fowl, and had no lack of food.
Upon a day it chanced that as we stood
Somewhat off shore to fetch about a ness,
Although the wind was blowing less and less,
We were entrapped into a fearful sea,
And carried by a current furiously
Away from shore, and there were we so tossed
That for a while we deemed ourselves but lost
Amid those tumbling waves ; but now at last,
When out of sight of land we long had passed,
The sea fell, and again toward land we stood,
Which, reached upon the tenth day, seemed right good,
But yet untilled, and mountains rose up high
Far inland, mingling with the cloudy sky.
Once more we took the land, and since we found
That, more than ever, beasts did there abound,
We pitched our camp beside a little stream,
But scarcely there of Paradise did dream
As heretofore. Our camp we fortified
With wall and dike, and then the land we tried,
And found the people most untaught and wild,

Nigh void of arts, but harmless, good, and mild,
Nor fearing us: with some of these we went
Back to our camp and people, with intent
To question them by her we last had got.
But when she heard their tongue she knew it not,
Nor did those others: but they seemed to say,
That o'er the mountains other lands there lay
Where folk dwelt, clothed and armed like unto us,
But made withal as they were timorous
And feared them much. Then we made signs that we,
So little feared by all that tumbling sea,
Would go to seek them; but they still would stay
Our journey; nathless what they meant to say
We scarce knew yet: howbeit, since these men
Were friendly, and the weather, which till then
Had been most fair, now grew to storm and rain,
And the wind blew on land, and not in vain
To us poor fools, that tale, half understood,
Those folk had told, midst all we thought it good
To haul our ships ashore, and build us there
A place where we might dwell, till we could fare
Along the coast, or inland it might be,
That fertile realm, those goodly men to see.
  Right foul the weather was a dreary space
While we abode with people of that place,
And built them huts, as well we could, for we
Who dwell in Norway have great mastery
In woodwright's craft; but they in turn would bring
Wild fruits to us, and many a woodland thing,
And catch us fish, and show us how to take
The smaller beasts, and meanwhile for our sake
They learned our tongue, and we too somewhat learned
Of words of theirs; but day by day we yearned
To cross those mountains, and I woke no morn,
To find myself lost, wretched, and forlorn,

But those far-off white summits gave me heart.
Now too those folk their story could impart
Concerning them, and that in short was this, —
Beyond them lay a fair abode of bliss
Where dwelt men like the Gods, and clad as we,
Who doubtless lived on through eternity
Unless the very world should come to naught,
But never had they had the impious thought
To scale those mountains, since most surely none
Could follow over them the fearful sun
And live, of men they knew; but as for us,
They said, who were so wise and glorious,
It might not be so.

Thus they spoke one eve
When the black rain-clouds for a while did leave
Upon the fresh and teeming earth to frown,
And we they spoke to had just set us down
Midmost their village: from the resting earth
Sweet odors rose, and in their noisy mirth
The women played, as rising from the brook
Off their long locks the glittering drops they shook;
Betwixt the huts the children raced along;
Some man was singing a wild barbarous song
Anigh us, and these folk, possessing naught
And lacking naught, lived happy, free from thought,
Or so it seemed — but we, what thing could pay
For all that we had left so far away?

Such thoughts as these I uttered murmuringly,
But lifting up mine eyes, against the sky
Beheld the snowy peaks brought near to us
By a strange sunset, red and glorious,
That seemed as though the much-praised land it lit,
And would do, long hours after we must sit
Beneath the twinkling stars with none to heed:
And though I knew it was not so indeed,

Yet did it seem to answer me, as though
It called us once more on our quest to go.
Then springing up I raised my voice and said:
'What is it, fellows? fear ye to be dead
Upon those peaks, when, if ye loiter here
Half dead, with very death still drawing near,
Your lives are wasted all the more for this,
That ye in this world thought to garner bliss?
Unless indeed ye chance to think it well
With this unclad and barbarous folk to dwell,
Deedless and hopeless; ye, to whom the land,
That o'er the world has sent so many a band
Of conquering men, was not yet good enough.
'Did ye then deem the way would not be rough
Unto the lovely land ye so desire?
Did ye not rather swear through blood and fire
And all ill things to follow up this quest
Till life or death your longing laid to rest?
'Let us not linger here, then, until fate
Make longing unavailing, hope too late,
And turn to lamentations all our prayers,
But with to-morrow cast aside your cares,
And stout of heart make ready for the strife
'Twixt this short time of dreaming and real life.
'Lo now, if but the half will come with me,
The summit of those mountains will I see,
Or else die first, — yea, if but twenty men
Will follow me; nor will I stay if ten
Will share my trouble or felicity —
What do I say? alone, O friends, will I
Seek for my life, for no man can die twice,
And death or life may give me Paradise!'

Then Nicholas said: 'Rolf, I will go with thee,
For desperate do I think the quest to be,

And I shall die, and that to me is well,
Or else I may forget, I cannot tell, —
Still I will go.'
Then Laurence said: 'I too
Will go, remembering what I said to you,
When any land, the first to which we came,
Seemed that we sought, and set your hearts aflame,
And all seemed won to you; but still I think,
Perchance years hence, the fount of life to drink,
Unless by some ill chance I first am slain, —
But boundless risk must pay for boundless gain.'
So most men said, but yet a few there were
Who said: 'Nay, soothly let us live on here.

We have been fools, and we must pay therefore
With this dull life, and labor very sore
Until we die; yet are we grown too wise
Upon this earth to seek for Paradise.
Leave us, but ye may yet come back again
When ye have found your trouble naught and vain.'

Well, in three days we left those men behind,
To dwell among the simple folk and kind,
Who were our guides at first, until that we
Reached the green hills clustered confusedly
About the mountains, then they turned, right glad
That till that time no horrors they had had;
But we still hopeful, making naught of time,
The rugged rocks now set ourselves to climb,
And lonely there for days and days and days
We stumbled through the blind and bitter ways,
Now rising to the never-melting snow,
Now beaten thence, and fain to try below
Another kingdom of that world of stone.
At last, when all our means of life were gone,
And some of us had fallen in the fight
With cold and weariness, we came in sight
Of what we hungered for, — what then, — what then?
A savage land, a land untilled again,
No lack of food while lasted shaft or bow,
But folk the worst of all we came to know;
Scarce like to men, yea, worse than most of beasts,
For of men slain they made their impious feasts:
These, as I deem for our fresh blood athirst,
From out the thick wood often on us burst.
Not heeding death, and in confused fight
We spent full many a wretched day and night,
That yet were happiest of the times we knew,
For with our grief such fearful foes we grew,

That Odin's gods had hardly scared men more
As fearless through the naked press we bore.
At first indeed some prisoners did we take,
Asking them questions for our fair land's sake,
Hoping 'gainst hope ; but when in vain had been
Our questioning, and we one day had seen
Their way of banqueting, then axe and spear
Ended the wretched life and sullen fear
Of any wild man wounded in the fight.
So with the failing of our hoped delight
We grew to be like devils, — then I knew,
At my own cost, what each man cometh to
When every pleasure from his life is gone,
And hunger and desire of life alone,
That still beget dull rage and bestial fears,
Like gnawing serpents through the world he bears.
What time we spent there? nay, I do not know:
For happy folk no time can pass too slow
Because they die ; because at last they die
And are at rest, no time too fast can fly
For wretches ; but eternity of woe
Had hemmed us in, and neither fast nor slow
Passed the dull time as we held reckoning.
Yet midst so many a wretched, hopeless thing
One hope there was, if it was still a hope,
At last, at last, to turn, and scale the cope
Of those dread mountains we had clambered o'er.
And we did turn, and with what labor sore,
What thirst, what hunger, and what wretchedness
We struggled daily, how can words express?
Yet amidst all the kind God led us on
Until at last a high raised pass we won
And like gray clouds afar beheld the sea,
And weakened with our toil and misery
Wept at that sight, that like a friend did seem

Forgotten long, beheld but in a dream
When we know not if he be still alive.
But thence descending, we with rocks did strive,
Till dwindled, weary, did we reach the plain
And came unto our untaught friends again,
And those we left, who yet alive and well,
Wedded to brown wives, fain would have us tell
The story of our woes, which when they heard,
The country people wondered at our word,
But not our fellows; and so all being said,
A little there we gathered lustihead,
Still talking over what was best to do.
And we the leaders yet were fain to go
From sea to sea and take what God might send,
Who at the worst our hopes and griefs would end
With that same death we once had hoped to stay,
Or even yet might send us such a day,
That our past troubles should but make us glad,
As men rejoice in pensive songs and sad.
This was our counsel: those that we had left
Said, that they once before had been bereft
Of friends and country by a sick man's dream;
That this their life not evil did they deem,
Nor would they rashly cast it down the wind;
But whoso went, that they would stay behind.
Others there were who said, whate'er might come,
They would at least seek for the happy home
They had forgotten once, and there at last
In penitence for sins and follies past
Wait for the death that they in vain had fled.

Well, when all things by all sides had been said,
We drew the ships again unto the sea,
Which those who went not with us carefully
Had tended for those years we were away,—

Which still they said was ten months and a day;
And these we rigged, and in a little while
The Fighting Man looked o'er the false sea's smile
Unto the land of Norway, and our band,
Across the bulwarks of the Rose-Garland,
Amidst of tears and doubt and misery
Sent after them a feeble farewell cry,
And they returned a tremulous faint cheer;
While from the sandy shell-strewn beach anear
The soft west wind across the waves bore out
A strange confused noise of wail and shout,
For there the dark line of the outland folk
A few familiar gray-eyed faces broke,
That minded us of Norway left astern,
Ere we began our heavy task to learn.

THE ELDER OF THE CITY.

Sirs, by my deeming had ye still gone on
When ye had crossed the mountains, ye had won
Unto another sea at last, and there
Had found clad folk, and cities great and fair,
Though not the deathless country of your thought.

THE WANDERER.

Yea, sirs, and short of that we had deemed naught,
Ere yet our hope of life had fully died,
And for those cities scarce should we have tried,
E'en had we known of them, and certainly
Naught but those bestial people did we see:
But let me hasten now unto the end.

Fair wind and lovely weather God did send
To us deserted men, who but twoscore
Now mustered; so we stood off from the shore

Still stretching south till we lost land again,
Because we deemed our labor would be vain
Upon the land too near where we had been,
Where none of us as yet a sign had seen
Of that which we desired. And now we few,
Thus left alone, each unto other grew
The dearer friends, and less accursed we seemed
As still the less of 'scaping death we dreamed,
And knew the lot of all men should be ours,
A checkered day of sunshine and of showers
Fading to twilight and dark night at last.

Those forest folk with ours their lot had cast,
And ever unto us were leal and true,
And now when all our tongue at last they knew
They told us tales, too long to tell as now;
Yet this one thing I fain to you would show
About the dying man our sight did kill
Amidst the corpses on that dreary hill:
Namely, that when their king drew nigh to death,
But still had left in him some little breath,
They bore him to that hill, when they had slain,
By a wild root that killed with little pain,
His servants and his wives like as we saw,
Thinking that thence the gods his soul would draw
To heaven; but the king being dead at last,
The servants dead, being taken down, they cast
Into the river, but the king they hung
Embalmed within that chapel, where they sung
Some office over him in solemn wise,
Amidst the smoke of plenteous sacrifice.

Well, though wild hope no longer in us burned,
Unto the land within awhile we turned,
And found it much the same, and still untilled,
And still its people of all arts unskilled;

And some were dangerous and some were kind ;
But midst them no more tidings did we find
Of what we once had deemed well won, but now
Was like the dream of some past kingly show.
What shall I say of all these savages,
Of these wide plains beset with unsown trees,
Through which untamed man-fearing beasts did range ?
To us at least there seemed but little change,
For we were growing weary of the world.
Whiles did we dwell ashore, whiles were we hurled
Out to the landless ocean, whiles we lay
Long time within some river or deep bay ;
And so the months went by, until at last,
When now three years were fully overpast
Since we had left our fellows, and grown old,
Our leaky ship along the water rolled,
Upon a day unto a land we came
Whose people spoke a tongue wellnigh the same
As that our forest people used, and who
A little of the arts of mankind knew,
And tilled the kind earth, certes not in vain ;
For wealth of melons we saw there, and grain
Strange unto us. Now, battered as we were,
Grown old before our time, in worn-out gear,
These people, when we first set foot ashore,
Garlands of flowers and fruits unto us bore,
And worshipped us as gods, and for no words
That we could say would cease to call us lords,
And pray our help to give them bliss and peace,
And fruitful seasons of the earth's increase.
Withal, at last, they, when in talk they fell
With our good forest-folk, to them did tell
That they were subject to a mighty king,
Who, as they said, ruled over everything,
And, dwelling in a glorious city, had

All things that men desire to make them glad.
'He,' said they, 'none the less shall be but slave
Unto your lords, and all that he may have
Will he but take as free gifts at their hands,
If they will deign henceforth to bless his lands
With their most godlike presence.'
Ye can think
How we poor wretched souls outworn might shrink
From such strange worship, that like mocking seemed
To us, who of a godlike state had dreamed,
And missed it in such wise; yet none the less
An earthly haven to our wretchedness
This city seemed, therefore we 'gan to pray
That some of them would guide us on our way,
Which words of ours they heard most joyously,
And brought us to their houses nigh the sea,
And feasted us with such things as they might.
But almost ere the ending of the night
We started on our journey, being upborne
In litters, like to kings, who so forlorn
Had been erewhile; so in some ten days' space
They brought us nigh their king's abiding-place;
And as we went the land seemed fair enough,
Though sometimes did we pass through forests rough,
Deserts and fens, yet for the most the way
Through ordered villages and tilled land lay,
Which, after all the squalid miseries
We had beheld, seemed heaven unto our eyes,
Though strange to us it was.
But now when we
From a hillside the city well could see,
Our guides there prayed us to abide awhile;
Wherefore we stayed, though eager to beguile
Our downcast hearts from brooding o'er our woe
By all the new things that abode might show.

So, while we bided on that flowery down,
The swiftest of them sped on toward the town
To bear them news of this unhoped-for bliss;
And we, who now some little happiness
Could find in that fair place and pleasant air,
Sat 'neath strange trees, on new flowers growing there
Of scent unlike to those we knew of old,
While unfamiliar tales the strange birds told.
But certes seemed that city fair enow
That spread out o'er the well-tilled vale below,
Though nowise built like such as we had seen;
Walled with white walls it was, and gardens green
Were set between the houses everywhere;
And now and then rose up a tower foursquare
Lessening in stage on stage; with many a hue
The house walls glowed, of red and green and blue,
And some with gold were well adorned, and one
From roofs of gold flashed back the noontide sun.
Had we seen such a place not long ago
We should have made great haste to get thereto,
Deeming that it must be the heaven we sought.
But now, while quietly we sat, and thought
Of many things, the gate wherein that road
Had end was opened wide, and thereout flowed
A glittering throng of people, young and old,
And men and women, much adorned with gold;
Wherefore we rose to meet them, who stood still
When they beheld us winding down the hill,
And lined both sides of the gray road; but we,
Now drawing nigh them, first of all could see
Old men in venerable raiment clad,
White-bearded, who sweet flowering branches had
In their right hands, then young men armed right well
After their way, which now were long to tell,
Then damsels clad in radiant gold array,

Who with sweet-smelling blossoms strewed the way
Before our feet, then men with gleaming swords
And glittering robes, and crowned like mighty lords,
And last of all, within the very gate
The king himself, round whom our guides did wait,
Kneeling with humble faces downward bent.
What wonder if, as 'twixt these folk we went,
Hearkening their singing and sweet minstrelsy,
A little nigher seemed our heaven to be —
Alas, a fair folk, a sweet spot of earth,
A land where many a lovely thing has birth,
But where all fair things come at last to die!
Now, when we three unto the king drew nigh
Before our fellows, he, adored of all,
Spared not before us on his knees to fall,
And as we deemed, who knew his speech but ill,
Began to pray us to bide with him still,
Speaking withal of some old prophecy
Which seemed to say that there we should not die.
What could we do amidst these splendid lords?
No time it was to doubt or make long words,
Nor with a short but happy life at hand
Durst we to ask about the perfect land,
Though well we felt the life whereof he spoke
Could never be among those mortal folk.
Therefore we wayworn, disappointed men,
So richly dowered with threescore years and ten,
Vouchsafed to grant the king his whole request,
Thinking within that town awhile to rest,
And gather news about the hope that fled
Still on before us, risen from the dead,
From out its tomb of toil and misery,
That held it while we saw but sea and sky,
Or untilled lands and people void of bliss,
And our own faces heavy with distress.

But entering now that town, what huge delight
We had therein ! how lovely to our sight
Was the well-ordered life of people there,
Who on that night within a palace fair
Made us a feast with great solemnity,
Till we forgot that we came there to die
If we should leave our quest, for as great kings
They treated us, and whatsoever things
We asked for, or could think of, those were ours !
Houses we had, noble with walls and towers,
Lovely with gardens, cooled with running streams,
And rich with gold beyond a miser's dreams ;
And men and women slaves, whose very lives
Were in our hands ; and fair and princely wives
If so we would ; and all things for delight,
Good to the taste or beautiful to sight,
The land might yield. They taught us of their law ;
The muster of their men-at-arms we saw,
As men who owned them ; in their judgment-place
Our lightest word made glad the pleader's face,
And the judge trembled at our faintest frown.
Think then, if we, late driven up and down
Upon the uncertain sea, or struggling sore
With barbarous men upon an untilled shore,
Or, at the best, midst people ignorant
Of arts and letters, fighting against want
Of very food, — think if we now were glad
From day to day, and as folk crazed and mad
Deemed our old selves, the wanderers on the sea.
And if at whiles midst our felicity
We yet remembered us of that past day
When in the long swell off the land we lay,
Weeping for joy at our accomplished dream,
And each to each a very god did seem, —
For fear was dead, — if we remembered this,

Yet, after all, was this our life of bliss,
A little thing that we had gained at last?
And must we sorrow for the idle past,
Or think it ill that thither we were led?
Thus seemed our old desire quite quenched and dead.

You must remember, though, that we were young.
Five years had passed since the gray fieldfare sung
To me a dreaming youth laid 'neath the thorn;
And though while we were wandering and forlorn
I seemed grown old and withered suddenly,
But twenty summers had I seen go by
When I left Viken on that desperate cruise.
But now again our wrinkles did we lose
With memory of our ills, and like a dream
Our fevered quest with its bad days did seem,
And many things grew fresh again, forgot
While in our hearts that wild desire was hot;
Yea, though at thought of Norway we might sigh,
Small was the pain which that sweet memory
Brought with its images seen fresh and clear,
And many an old familiar thing grown dear,
We loved but little while we lived with it.

So smoothly o'er our heads the days did flit,
Yet not eventless either, for we taught
Such lore as we from our own land had brought
Unto this folk, who when they wrote must draw
Such draughts as erst at Micklegarth I saw,
Writ for the evil Pharaoh-kings of old;
Their arms were edged with copper or with gold,
Whereof they had great plenty, or with flint;
No armor had they fit to bear the dint
Of tools like ours, and little could avail
Their archer craft; their boats knew naught of sail,

And many a feat of building could we show,
Which midst their splendor still they did not know.
And midst of all, war fell upon the land,
And in forefront of battle must we stand,
To do our best, though little mastery
We thought it then to make such foemen flee
As there we met; but when again we came
Into the town, with something like to shame
We took the worship of that simple folk
Rejoicing for their freedom from the yoke
That round about their necks had hung so long.
For thus that war began: some monarch strong
Conquered their land of old, and thereon laid
A dreadful tribute, which they still had paid
With tears and curses; for as each fifth year
Came round, this heavy shame they needs must bear:
Ten youths, ten maidens, must they choose by lot
Among the fairest that they then had got,
Who a long journey o'er the hills must go
Unto the tyrant, nor with signs of woe
Enter his city, but in bright array,
And harbingered by songs and carols gay,
Betake them to the temple of his god;
But when the streets their weary feet had trod
Their wails must crown the long festivity,
For on the golden altar must they die.
Such was the sentence till the year we came,
And counselled them to put away this shame
If they must die therefor; so on that year
Barren of blood the devil's altars were,
Wherefore a herald clad in strange attire
The tyrant sent them, and but blood and fire
His best words were; him they sent back again
Defied by us, who made his threats but vain,

When face to face with those ill folk we stood
Ready to seal our counsel with our blood.
Past all belief they loved us for all this,
And if it would have added to our bliss
That they should die, this surely they had done;
So smoothly slipped the years past one by one,
And we had lived and died as happy there
As any men the laboring earth may bear,
But for the poison of that wickedness
That led us on God's edicts to redress.
At first indeed death seemed so far away,
So sweet in our new home was every day,
That we forgot death like the most of men
Who cannot count the threescore years and ten;
Yet we grew fearful as the time drew on,
And needs must think of all we might have won.
Yea, by so much the happier that we were
By just so much increased on us our fear;
And those old times of our past misery
Seemed not so evil as the days went by
Faster and faster with the year's increase,
For loss of youth to us was loss of peace.

Two gates unto the road of life there are,
And to the happy youth both seem afar, —
Both seem afar: so far the past one seems,
The gate of birth, made dim with many dreams,
Bright with remembered hopes, beset with flowers;
So far it seems he cannot count the hours
That to this midway path have led him on
Where every joy of life now seemeth won, —
So far, he thinks not of the other gate,
Within whose shade the ghosts of dead hopes wait
To call upon him as he draws anear,

Despoiled, alone, and dull with many a fear,
'Where is thy work? how little thou hast done!
Where are thy friends? why art thou so alone?'
How shall he weigh his life? slow goes the time
The while the fresh dew-sprinkled hill we climb,
Thinking of what shall be the other side;
Slow pass perchance the minutes we abide
On the gained summit, blinking at the sun;
But when the downward journey is begun
No more our feet may loiter, past our ears
Shrieks the harsh wind scarce noted midst our fears,
And battling with the hostile things we meet,
Till, ere we know it, our weak, shrinking feet
Have brought us to the end and all is done.

And so with us it was, when youth twice won
Now for the second time had passed away,
And we unwitting were grown old and gray,
And one by one, the death of some dear friend,
Some cherished hope, brought to a troublous end
Our joyous life; as in a dawn of June
The lover, dreaming of the brown bird's tune
And longing lips unto his own brought near,
Wakes up the crashing thunder-peal to hear.
So, sirs, when this world's pleasures came to naught,
Not upon God we set our wayward thought,
But on the folly our own hearts had made.
Once more the stories of the past we weighed
With what we hitherto had found; once more
We longed to be by some unknown far shore;
Once more our life seemed trivial, poor, and vain,
Till we our lost fool's paradise might gain,
And we were like the felon doomed to die,
Who when unto the sword he draws anigh
Struggles and cries, though erewhile in his cell

He heard the priest of heaven and pardon tell,
Weeping and half contented to be slain.

Was I the first who thought of this again?
Perchance I was; but howsoe'er that be,
Long time I thought of these things, certainly,
Ere I durst stir my fellows to the quest,
Though secretly myself with little rest
For tidings of our lovely land I sought.
Should prisoners from another folk be brought
Unto our town, I questioned them of this;
I asked the wandering merchants of a bliss
They dreamed not of, in chaffering for their goods;
The hunter in the far-off lonely woods,
The fisher in the rivers nigh the sea,
Must tell their wild strange stories unto me.
Within the temples books of records lay
Such as I told of; thereon day by day
I pored, and got long stories from the priests
Of many-handed gods with heads of beasts,
And such-like dreariness; and still, midst all
Sometimes a glimmering light would seem to fall
Upon my ignorance, and less content
As time went on I grew, and ever went
About my daily life distractedly,
Until at last I felt that I must die
Or to my fellows tell what in me was.
So on a day I came to Nicholas,
And trembling 'gan to tell of this and that;
And as I spoke with downcast eyes I sat,
Fearing to see some scorn within his eyes,
Or horror at unhappy memories;
But now, when mine eyes could no longer keep
The tears from falling, he too, nigh to weep,
Spoke out: 'O Rolf, why hast thou come to me.

Who, thinking I was happy, now must see
That only with the ending of our breath,
Or by that fair escape from fear and death,
Can we forget the hope that erewhile led
Our little band to woe and drearihead?
But now are we grown old, Rolf, and to-day
Life is a little thing to cast away,
Nor can we suffer many years of it
If all goes wrong; so no more will I sit,
Praying for all the things that cannot be:
Tell thou our fellows what thou tellest me,
Nor fear that I will leave you in your need.'
Well, sirs, with all the rest I had such speed
That men enough of us resolved to go
The very bitterness of Death to know
Or else to conquer him; some idle tale
With our kind hosts would plenteously avail,
For of our quest we durst not tell them aught,
Since something more than doubt was in our thought,
Though unconfessed, that we should fail at last,
Nor had we quite forgot our perils past.

Alas! can weak men hide such thoughts as these?
I think the summer wind that bows the trees
Through which the dreamer wandereth muttering
Will bear abroad some knowledge of the thing
That so consumes him; howsoe'er that be,
We, born to drink the dregs of misery,
Found in the end that some one knew our aim.
For while we weighed the chances of the game
That we must play, nor yet knew what to shun,
Or what to do, there came a certain one,
A young man strange within the place, to me,
Who, swearing me at first to secrecy,
Began to tell me of the hoped-for land.

The trap I saw not; with a shaking hand
And beating heart, unto the notes of years
I turned, long parchments blotted with my tears,
And tremulously read them out aloud;
But still, because the hurrying thoughts would crowd
My whirling brain, scarce heard the words I read.
Yet in the end it seemed that what he said
Tallied with that, heaped up so painfully.
Now listen! this being done, he said to me:
'O godlike Eastern man, believest thou
That I who look so young and ruddy now
Am very old? because in sooth I come
To seek thee and to lead thee to our home
With all thy fellows. But if thou dost not,
Come now with me, for nigh unto this spot
My brother, left behind, an ancient man
Now dwelleth, but as gray-haired, weak and wan
As I am fresh; of me he doth not know,
So surely shall our speech together show
The truth of this my message.' 'Yea,' said I,
'I doubt thee not, yet would I certainly
Hear the old man talk if he liveth yet,
That I a clearer tale of this may set
Before my fellows; come then, lead me there.'
Thus easily I fell into the snare;
For as along the well-known streets we went,
An old hoar man there met us, weak and bent,
Who staying us, the while with age he shook,
My lusty fellow by the shoulder took,
And said, 'O stranger, canst thou be the son,
Or but the younger double of such an one,
Who dwelt once in the weaver's street hereby?'
But the young man looked on him lovingly,
And said, 'O certes, thou art now grown old
That thou thy younger brother canst behold
And call him stranger.' 'Yea, yea, old enow,'

The other said; 'what fables talkest thou?
My brother has but three years less than I,
Nor dealeth time with men so marvellously
That he should seem like twenty, I fourscore:
Thou art my nephew, let the jest pass o'er.'
'Nay,' said he, 'but it is not good to talk
Here in the crowded street, so let us walk
Unto thine habitation. Dost thou mind,
When we were boys, how once we chanced to find
That crock of copper money hid away
Up in the loft, and how on that same day
We bought this toy and that, thou a short sword
And I a brazen boat?'
But at that word
The old man wildly on him 'gan to stare
And said no more, the while we three did fare
Unto his house; but there, we being alone,
Many undoubted signs the younger one
Gave to his brother, saying withal that he
Had gained the land of all felicity,
Where, after trials then too long to tell,
The slough of grisly eld from off him fell,
And left him strong, and fair, and young again;
Neither from that time had he suffered pain
Greater or less, or feared at all to die;
And though, he said, he knew not certainly
If he should live forever, this he knew,
His days should not be full of pain and few
As most men's lives were. Now, when asked why he
Had left his home, a deadly land to see,
He said that people's chiefs had sent him there,
Moved by report that tall men, white and fair,
Like to the gods, had come across the sea,
Of whom old seers had told that they should be
Lords of that land; therefore his charge was this,

To lead us forth to that abode of bliss,
But secretly, since for the other folk
They were as beasts to toil beneath the yoke.
'But,' said he, 'brother, thou shalt go with me,
If now at last no doubt be left in thee
Of who I am.'
At that, to end it all
The weak old man upon his neck did fall,
Rejoicing for his lot with many tears;
But I, rejoicing too, yet felt vague fears
Within my heart, for now almost too nigh
We seemed to that long-sought felicity.
What should I do, though? What could it avail
Unto these men, to make a feigned tale?
Besides, in all no faltering could I find,
Nor did they go beyond or fall behind
What in such cases such-like men would do,
Therefore I needs must think their story true.
So now unto my fellows did I go,
And all things in due order straight did show,
And had the man who told the tale at hand;
Of whom some made great question of the land,
And where it was, and how he found it first;
And still he answered boldly to the worst
Of all their questions; then from out the place
He went, and we were left there face to face.
And joy it was to see the dark cheeks, tanned
By many a summer of that fervent land,
Flush up with joy, and see the gray eyes gleam
Through the dull film of years, as that sweet dream
Flickered before them, now grown real and true.
But when the certainty of all we knew,
Dreaming for sure our quest would not be vain,
We got us ready for the sea again.
But to the city's folk we told no more

Than that we needs must make for some far shore,
Whence we would come again to them, and bring,
For them and us, full many a wished-for thing
To make them glad.
Then answered they indeed
That our departing made their hearts to bleed,
But with no long words prayed us still to stay,
And I remembered me of that past day,
And somewhat grieved I felt, that so it was ;
Not thinking how the deeds of men must pass,
And their remembrance as their bodies die,
Or, if their memories fade not utterly,
Like curious pictures shall they be at best,
For men to gaze at while they sit at rest,
Talking of alien things and feasting well.

Ah me ! I loiter, being right loth to tell
The things that happened to us in the end.
Down to the noble river did we wend
Where lay the ships we taught these folk to make,
And there the fairest of them did we take,
And so began our voyage ; thirty-three
Were left of us who erst had crossed the sea,
Five of the forest people, and beside
None but the fair young man, our new-found guide,
And his old brother : setting sail with these,
We left astern our gilded palaces
And all the good things God had given us there
With small regret, however good they were.
Well, in twelve days our vessel reached the sea,
When turning round we ran on northerly
In sight of land at whiles ; what need to say
How the time passed from hopeful day to day?
Suffice it that the wind was fair and good,
And we most joyful, as still north we stood ;

Until when we a month at sea had been,
And for six days no land at all had seen,
We sighted it once more, whereon our guide
Shouted, 'O fellows, lay all fear aside,
This is the land whereof I spake to you.'
But when the happy tidings all men knew,
Trembling and pale we watched the land grow great;
And when above the waves the noontide heat
Had raised a vapor 'twixt us and the land
That afternoon, we saw a high ness stand
Out in the sea, and nigher when we came,
And all the sky with sunset was aflame,
'Neath the dark hill we saw a city lie,
Washed by the waves, girt round with ramparts high.
A little nigher yet, and then our guide
Bade us to anchor, lowering from our side
The sailless keel wherein he erst had come,
Through many risks, to bring us to his home.
But when our eager hands this thing had done,
He and his brother gat therein alone.
But first he said, 'Abide here till the morn;
And when ye hear the sound of harp and horn,
And varied music, run out every oar,
Up anchor, and make boldly for the shore.
O happy men! wellnigh do I regret
That I am not as you, to whom as yet
That moment past all moments is unknown,
When first unending life to you is shown.
But now I go, that all in readiness
May be, your souls with this delight to bless.'
He waved farewell to us, and went; but we,
As the night grew, beheld across the sea
Lights moving on the quays, and now and then
We heard the chanting of the outland men.
How can I tell of that strange troublous night,

Troublous and strange, though 'neath the moonshine white,
Peace seemed upon the sea, the glimmering town,
The shadows of the tree-besprinkled down,
The moveless dewy folds of our loose sail?
But how could these for peace to us avail?
Weary with longing, blind with great amaze,
We struggled now with past and future days;
And not in vain our former joy we thought,
Since thirty years our wandering feet had brought
To this at last, — and yet, what will you have?
Can man be made content? We wished to save
The bygone years; our hope, our painted toy,
We feared to miss, drowned in that sea of joy.
Old faces still reproached us: 'We are gone,
And ye are entering into bliss alone;
And can ye now forget? Year passes year,
And still ye live on joyous, free from fear;
But where are we? where is the memory
Of us, to whom ye once were drawn so nigh?
Forgetting and alone ye enter in;
Remembering all, alone we wail our sin,
And cannot touch you.' — Ah, the blessed pain!
When heaven just gained was scarcely all a gain.
How could we weigh that boundless treasure then,
Or count the sorrows of the sons of men?
Ah, woe is me to think upon that night!

Day came, and with the dawning of the light
We were astir, and from our deck espied
The people clustering by the water-side,
As if to meet us; then across the sea
We heard great horns strike up triumphantly,
And then scarce knowing what we did, we weighed
And running out the oars for shore we made,
With banners fluttering out from yard and mast.

We reached the well-built marble quays at last,
Crowded with folk, and in the front of these
There stood our guide, decked out with braveries,
Holding his feeble brother by the hand.
Then speechless, trembling, did we now take land,
Leaving all woes behind; but when our feet
The happy soil of that blest land did meet,
Fast fell our tears, as on a July day
The thunder-shower falls pattering on the way,
And certes some one we desired to bless,
But scarce knew whom midst all our thankfulness.
Now the crowd opened, and an ordered band
Of youths and damsels, flowering boughs in hand,
Came forth to meet us, just as long ago,
When first we won some rest from pain and woe,
Except that now eld chained not any one.
No man was wrinkled but ourselves alone,
But smooth and beautiful, bright-eyed and glad,
Were all we saw, in fair thin raiment clad
Fit for the sunny place.
But now our friend,
Our guide, who brought us to this glorious end,
Led us amidst that band, who 'gan to sing
Some hymn of welcome, midst whose carolling
Faint-hearted men we must have been indeed
To doubt that all was won; nor did we heed
That, when we well were gotten from the quay,
Armed men went past us by the very way
That we had come, nor thought of their intent,
For armor unto us was ornament,
And had been now for many peaceful years,
Since bow and axe had dried the people's tears.
Let all that pass — with song and minstrelsy
Through many streets they led us, fair to see,
For nowhere did we meet maimed, poor, or old,

But all were young and clad in silk and gold.
Like a king's court the common ways did seem
On that fair morn of our accomplished dream.
Far did we go, through market-place and square,
Past fane and palace, till a temple fair
We came to, set aback midst towering trees,
But raised above the tallest of all these.
So there we entered through a brazen gate,
And all the thronging folk without did wait,
Except the golden-clad melodious band.
But when within the precinct we did stand,
Another rampart girdled round the fane,
And that being passed another one again,
And small space was betwixt them, all these three
Of white stones laid in wondrous masonry
Were builded, but the fourth we now passed through
Was half of white and half of ruddy hue ;
Nor did we reach the temple through this one,
For now a fifth wall came, of dark red stone
With golden coping and wide doors of gold ;
And this being passed, our eyes could then behold
The marvellous temple, foursquare, rising high
In stage on stage up toward the summer sky,
Like the unfinished tower that Nimrod built
Before the concord of the world was spilt.
So now we came into the lowest hall,
A mighty way across from wall to wall,
Where carven pillars held a gold roof up,
And silver walls, fine as an Indian cup,
With figures monstrous as a dream were wrought,
And underfoot the floor beyond all thought
Was wonderful, for like the tumbling sea
Beset with monsters did it seem to be ;
But in the midst a pool of ruddy gold
Caught in its waves a glittering fountain cold,

And through the bright shower of its silver spray
Dimly we saw the high-raised daïs, gay
With wondrous hangings, for high up and small
The windows were within the dreamlike hall;
Betwixt the pillars wandered damsels fair
Crooning low songs, or filling all the air
With incense wafted to strange images
That made us tremble, since we saw in these
The devils unto whom we now must cry
Ere we began our new felicity;
Nathless no altars did we see but one
Which dimly from before the daïs shone,
Built of green stone, with horns of copper bright.
Now, when we entered from the outer light
And all the scents of the fresh day were past,
With its sweet breezes, a dull shade seemed cast
Over our joy; what then? not if we would
Could we turn back, — and surely all was good.
But now they brought us vestments rich and fair,
And bade us our own raiment put off there,
Which straight we did, and with a hollow sound
Like mournful bells our armor smote the ground,
And damsels took the weapons from our hands,
That might have gleamed with death in other lands,
And won us praise; at last, when all was done,
And brighter than the Kaiser each man shone,
Us unarmed helpless men the music led
Up to the daïs, and there our old guide said,
'Rest, happy men! the time will not be long
Ere they will bring with incense, dance, and song,
The sacred cup, your life and happiness,
And many a time this fair hour shall ye bless.'

Alas, sirs! words are weak to tell of it.
I seemed to see a smile of mockery flit

Across his face as from our thrones he turned,
And in my heart a sudden fear there burned,
The last, I said, for ever and a day ;
But even then with harsh and ominous bray
A trumpet through the monstrous pillars rung,
And to our feet with sudden fear we sprung ; —
Too late, too late ! for through all doors did stream
Armed men, that filled the place with clash and gleam ;
And when the dull sound of their moving feet
Was still, a fearful sight our eyes did meet, —
A fearful sight to us, — *old men and gray*
Betwixt the bands of soldiers took their way,
And at their head in wonderful attire,
Holding within his hand a pot of fire,
Moved the false brother of the traitorous guide,
Who with bowed head walked ever by his side ;
But as anigh the elders 'gan to draw,
We, almost turned to stone by what we saw,
Heard the old man say to the younger one,
'Speak to them that thou knowest, O fair *Son !*'

Then the wretch said, 'O ye, who sought to find
Unending life against the law of kind
Within this land, fear ye not now too much,
For no man's hand your bodies here shall touch,
But rather with all reverence folk shall tend
Your daily lives, until at last they end
By slow decay ; and ye shall pardon us
The trap whereby beings made so glorious
As ye are made, we drew unto this place.
Rest ye content, then ! for although your race
Comes from the gods, yet are ye conquered here,
As we would conquer them, if we knew where
They dwell from day to day, and with what arms
We, overcoming them, might win such charms
That we might make the world what ye desire.

'Rest then at ease, and if ye e'er shall tire
Of this abode, remember at the worst
Life flitteth, whether it be blessed or cursed.
But will ye tire? ye are our gods on earth
Whiles that ye live, nor shall your lives lack mirth,
For song, fair women, and heart-cheering wine
The chain of solemn days shall here intwine
With odorous flowers; ah, surely ye are come,
When all is said, unto an envied home!'

Like an old dream, dreamed in another dream,
I hear his voice now, see the hopeless gleam
Through the dark place of that thick wood of spears.
That fountain's splash rings yet within mine ears
I thought the fountain of eternal youth, —
Yet I can scarce remember in good truth
What then I felt: I should have felt as he,
Who, waking after some festivity,
Sees a dim land, and things unspeakable,
And comes to know at last that it is hell, —
I cannot tell you, nor can tell you why,
Driven by what hope, I cried my battle cry
And rushed upon him; this I know indeed,
My naked hands were good to me at need,
That sent the traitor to his due reward,
Ere I was dragged off by the hurrying guard,
Who spite of all used neither sword nor spear,
Nay, as it seemed, touched us with awe and fear.
Though at the last grown all too weak to strive
They brought us to the daïs scarce alive,
And changed our tattered robes again, and there
Bound did we sit, each in his golden chair,
Beholding many mummeries that they wrought
About the altar; till at last they brought,
Crowned with fair flowers, and clad in robes of gold,

The folk that from the wood we won of old, —
Why make long words? before our very eyes
Our friends they slew, a fitting sacrifice
To us their new-gained gods, who sought to find
Within that land a people just and kind
Who could not die, or take away the breath
From living men.
What thing but that same death
Had we left now to hope for? Death must come
And find us somewhere an enduring home.
Will grief kill men, as some folk think it will?
Then are we of all men most hard to kill.
The time went past, the dreary days went by
In dull unvarying round of misery;
Nor can I tell if it went fast or slow, —
What would it profit you the time to know
That we spent there? All I can say to you
Is, that no hope our prison wall shone through,
That ever we were guarded carefully,
While day and dark and dark and day went by
Like such a dream as in the early night
The sleeper wakes from in such sore affright,
Such panting horror, that to sleep again
He will not turn, to meet such shameful pain.

Lo! such were we; but as we hoped before
Where no hope was, so now, when all seemed o'er
But sorrow for our lives so cast away,
Again the bright sun brought about the day.
At last the temple's dull monotony
Was broke by noise of armed men hurrying by
Within the precinct, and we seemed to hear
Shouts from without of anger and of fear,
And noises as of battle; and red blaze

The night sky showed: this lasted through two days.
But on the third our guards were whispering
Pale-faced, as though they feared some coming thing;
And when the din increased about noontide,
No longer there with us would they abide,
But left us free. Judge then if our hearts beat,
When any pain or death itself was sweet
To hideous life within that wicked place,
Where every day brought on its own disgrace.
Few words betwixt us passed. We knew indeed
Where our old armor once so good at need
Hung up as relics nigh the altar-stead;
Thither we hurried, and from heel to head
Soon were we armed, and our old spears and swords,
Clashing 'gainst steel and stone, spoke hopeful words
To us, the children of a warrior race.
But round unto the hubbub did we face,
And through the precinct strove to make our way
Set close together. In besmirched array
Some met us, and some wounded very sore,
And some who wounded men to harbor bore;
But these, too busy with their pain or woe
To note us much, unchallenged let us go;
Then here and there we passed some shrinking maid
In a dark corner trembling and afraid,
But eager for the news about the fight.
Through trodden gardens then we came in sight
Of the third rampart that begirt the fane,
Which now the foemen seemed at point to gain,
For o'er the wall the ladders 'gan to show,
And huge confusion was there down below
'Twixt wall and wall; but as the gate we passed
A man from out the crowd came hurrying fast,
But, drawing nigh us, stopped short suddenly,
And cried, 'O masters, help us or we die!

This impious people 'gainst their ancient lords
Have turned, and in their madness drawn their swords.
Yea, and they now prevail, and fearing not
The dreadful gods still grows their wrath more hot.
Wherefore to bring you here was my intent,
But the kind gods themselves your hands have sent
To save us all, and this fair holy house
With your strange arms, and hearts most valorous.'
No word we said, for even as he spoke
A frightful clamor from the wall outbroke,
As the thin line of soldiers thereupon,
Crushed back, and broken, left the rampart won,
And leapt and tumbled therefrom as they could,
While in their place the conquering foemen stood.
Then the weak, wavering, huddled crowd below
Their weight upon the inner wall 'gan throw,
And at the narrow gates by hundreds died;
For not long did the enemy abide
On the gained rampart, but by every way
Got to the ground and 'gan all round to slay,
Till great and grim the slaughter grew to be.
But we, well pleased our tyrants' end to see,
Still firm against the inner wall did stand,
While round us surged the press on either hand.
Nor did we fear, for what was left of life
For us to fear for? So at last the strife
Drawn inward, in that place did much abate,
And we began to move unto the gate
Betwixt the dead and living, and these last
Ever with fearful glances by us passed,
Nor hindered aught; but mindful of the lore
Our fathers gained on many a bloody shore,
We, when unto the street we made our way,
Moved as in fight, nor broke our close array,
Though no man harmed us of the troubled crowd

That thronged the streets with shouts and curses loud,
But rather, when our clashing arms they heard,
Their hubbub lulled, and they as men afeared
Drew back before us.
Well, as nigh we drew
Unto the sea, the men showed sparse and few,
Though frightened women standing in the street
Before their doors we did not fail to meet,
And passed by folk who at their doors laid down
Men wounded in the fight; so through the town
We reached the unguarded water-gate at last,
And there, nigh weeping, saw the green waves cast
Against the quays, whereby five tall ships lay:
For in that devil's house, right many a day
Had passed with all its dull obscenity
We counted not, and while we longed to die,
And by all men were now forgotten quite
Except those priests, the people as they might
Made ships like ours; in whose new handiwork
Few mariners and fearful now did lurk,
And these soon fled before us, therefore we
Stayed not to think, but running hastily
Down the lone quay, seized on the nighest ship,
Nor yet till we had let the hawser slip
Dared we be glad, and then indeed once more,
Though we no longer hoped for our fair shore,
Our past disgrace, worse than the very hell,
Though hope was dead, made things seem more than well,
For if we died that night, yet were we free.
Ah! with what joy we sniffed the fresh salt sea
After the musky odors of that place!
With what delight each felt upon his face
The careless wind, our master and our slave,
As through the green seas fast from shore we drave,
Scarce witting where we went!

But now when we
Beheld that city, far across the sea,
A thing gone past, nor any more could hear
The mingled shouts of victory and of fear,
From out the midst thereof shot up a fire
In a long, wavering, murky, smoke-capped spire
That still with every minute wider grew,
So that the ending of the place we knew
Where we had passed such days of misery,
And still more glad turned round unto the sea.

My tale grows near its ending, for we stood
Southward to our kind folk e'en as we could,
But made slow way, for ever heavily
Our ship sailed, and she often needs must lie
At anchor in some bay, the while with fear
Ourselves we followed up the fearful deer,
Or filled our water-vessels, for indeed
Of meat and drink were we in bitter need,
As well might be, for scarcely could we choose
What ships from off that harbor to cast loose.
Midst this there died the captain, Nicholas,
Whom, though he brought us even to this pass,
I loved the most of all men ; even now
When that seems long past, I can scarce tell how
I bear to live, since he could live no more.
Certes he took our failure very sore,
And often do I think he fain had died,
But yet for very love must needs abide
A little while, and yet awhile again,
As though to share the utmost of our pain,
And miss the ray of comfort and sweet rest
Wherewith ye end our long disastrous quest, —
A drearier place than ever heretofore

The world seemed, as from that far nameless shore
We turned and left him 'neath the trees to bide ;
For midst our rest worn out at last he died.
And such seemed like to hap to us as well,
If any harder thing to us befell
Than was our common life ; and still we talked
How our old friends would meet men foiled and balked
Of all the things that were to make them glad.
Ah, sirs ! no sight of them henceforth we had ;
A wind arose, which blowing furiously
Drove us out helpless to the open sea ;
Eight days it blew, and when it fell we lay
Leaky, dismasted, a most helpless prey
To winds and waves, and with but little food ;
Then with hard toil a feeble sail and rude
We rigged up somehow, and nigh hopelessly,
Expecting death, we staggered o'er the sea
For ten days more, but when all food and drink
Were gone for three days, and we needs must think
That in mid-ocean we were doomed to die,
One morn again did land before us lie ;
And we rejoiced, as much at least as he,
Who, tossing on his bed deliriously,
Tortured with pain, hears the physician say
That he shall have one quiet, painless day
Before he dies. — What more ? we soon did stand
In this your peaceful and delicious land,
Amongst the simple kindly country folk.
But when I heard the language that they spoke,
From out my heart a joyous cry there burst,
So sore for friendly words was I athirst,
And I must fall a-weeping, to have come
To such a place that seemed a blissful home,
After the tossing from rough sea to sea ;
So weak at last, so beaten down were we.

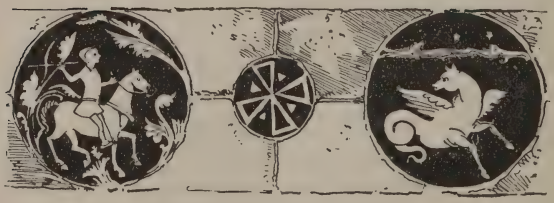
What shall I say in these kind people's praise,
Who treated us like brothers for ten days,
Till with their tending we grew strong again,
And then withal in country cart and wain
Brought us unto this city where we are?
May God be good to them for all their care!
And now, sirs, all our wanderings have ye heard,
And all our story to the utmost word;
And here hath ending all our foolish quest,
Not at the worst if hardly at the best,
Since ye are good. — Sirs, we are old and gray
Before our time; in what coin shall we pay
For this your goodness? take it not amiss
That we, poor souls, must pay you back for this
As good men pay back God, who, raised above
The heavens and earth, yet needeth earthly love.

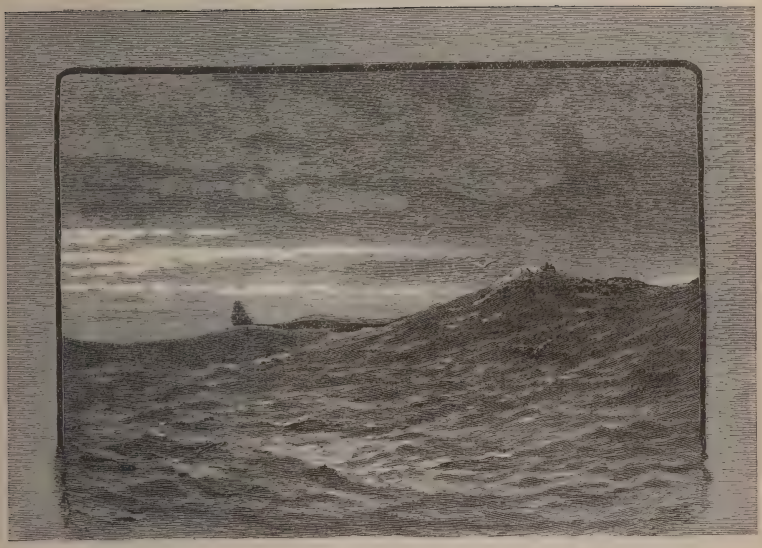
THE ELDER OF THE CITY.

O friends, content you! this is much indeed,
And we are paid, thus garnering for our need
Your blessings only, bringing in their train
God's blessings as the south wind brings the rain.
And for the rest, no little thing shall be —
Since ye through all yet keep your memory —
The gentle music of the bygone years,
Long past to us with all their hopes and fears.
Think, if the gods, who mayhap love us well,
Sent to our gates some ancient chronicle
Of that sweet unforgotten land long left,
Of all the lands wherefrom we now are reft, —
Think, with what joyous hearts, what reverence,
What songs, what sweet flowers, we should bring it thence,
What images would guard it, what a shrine
Above its well-loved black and white should shine!

How should it pay our labor day by day
To look upon the fair place where it lay;
With what rejoicings even should we take
Each well-writ copy that the scribes might make,
And bear them forth to hear the people's shout,
E'en as good rulers' children are borne out
To take the people's blessing on their birth,
When all the city falls to joy and mirth!

Such, sirs, are ye, our living chronicle,
And scarce can we be grieved at what befell
Your lives in that too hopeless quest of yours,
Since it shall bring us wealth of happy hours
Whiles that we live, and to our sons, delight,
And their sons' sons.
But now, sirs, let us go,
That we your new abodes with us may show,
And tell you what your life henceforth may be,
But poor, alas! to that ye hoped to see.





Think, listener, that I had the luck to stand,
Awhile ago, within a flowery land,
Fair beyond words; that thence I brought away
Some blossoms that before my footsteps lay,
Not plucked by me, not over-fresh or bright;
Yet, since they minded me of that delight,
Within the pages of this book I laid
Their tender petals, there in peace to fade.
Dry are they now, and void of all their scent
And lovely color, yet what once was meant
By these dull stains some men may yet descry
As dead upon the quivering leaves they lie.
Behold them here, and mock me if you will,
But yet believe no scorn of men can kill
My love of that fair land wherefrom they came,
Where midst the grass their petals once did flame.

Moreover, since that land, as ye should know,
Bears not alone the gems for summer's show,
Or gold and pearls for fresh green-coated spring,
Or rich adornment for the flickering wing
Of fleeting autumn, but hath little fear
For the white conqueror of the fruitful year,
So in these pages month by month I show
Some portion of the flowers that erst did blow
In lovely meadows of the varying land,
Wherein erewhile I had the luck to stand.

MARCH.

Slayer of the winter, art thou here again?
O welcome, thou that bring'st the summer nigh!
The bitter wind makes not thy victory vain,
Nor will we mock thee for thy faint blue sky.
Welcome, O March! whose kindly days and dry
Make April ready for the throstle's song,
Thou first redresser of the winter's wrong!

Yea, welcome, March! and though I die ere June,
Yet for the hope of life I give thee praise,
Striving to swell the burden of the tune
That even now I hear thy brown birds raise,
Unmindful of the past or coming days;
Who sing: 'O joy! a new year is begun;
What happiness to look upon the sun!'

Ah, what begetteth all this storm of bliss
But Death himself, who, crying solemnly,
E'en from the heart of sweet Forgetfulness,
Bids us 'Rejoice, lest pleasureless ye die.
Within a little time must ye go by.
Stretch forth your open hands, and while ye live
Take all the gifts that Death and Life may give.'

PRELUDE TO ATALANTA'S RACE.

Behold once more within a quiet land
The remnant of that once aspiring band,
With all hopes fallen away, but such as light
The sons of men to that unfailing night,
That death they needs must look on face to face.
Time passed, and ever fell the days apace
From off the new-strung chaplet of their life;
Yet though the time with no bright deeds was rife,
Though no fulfilled desire now made them glad,
They were not quite unhappy; rest they had,
And with their hope their fear had passed away.
New things and strange they saw from day to day;
Honored they were, and had no lack of things
For which men crouch before the feet of kings,
And, stripped of honor, yet may fail to have.
Therefore their latter journey to the grave
Was like those days of later autumn-tide,
When he who in some town may chance to bide
Opens the window for the balmy air,
And seeing the golden hazy sky so fair,
And from some city garden hearing still
The wheeling rooks the air with music fill,
Sweet hopeful music, thinketh, Is this spring,
Surely the year can scarce be perishing?
But then he leaves the clamor of the town,
And sees the withered scanty leaves fall down,
The half-ploughed field, the flowerless garden-plot,

The dark full stream by summer long forgot,
The tangled hedges where, relaxed and dead,
The twining plants their withered berries shed,
And feels therewith the treachery of the sun,
And knows the pleasant time is wellnigh done.
In such Saint Luke's short summer lived these men,
Nearing the goal of threescore years and ten.
The elders of the town their comrades were,
And they to them were waxen now as dear
As ancient men to ancient men can be.
Grave matters of belief and polity
They spoke of oft, but not alone of these;
For in their times of idleness and ease
They told of poets' vain imaginings,
And memories vague of half-forgotten things,
Not true or false, but sweet to think upon.

For nigh the time when first that land they won,
When new-born March made fresh the hopeful air,
The wanderers sat within a chamber fair,
Guests of that city's rulers, when the day
Far from the sunny noon had fallen away;
The sky grew dark, and on the window-pane
They heard the beating of the sudden rain.
Then, all being satisfied with plenteous feast,
There spoke an ancient man, the land's chief priest,
Who said, 'Dear guests, the year begins to-day,
And fain are we, before it pass away,
To hear some tales of that now altered world,
Wherefrom our fathers in old time were hurled
By the hard hands of fate and destiny.
Nor would ye hear perchance unwillingly
How we have dealt with stories of the land
Wherein the tombs of our forefathers stand:
Wherefore henceforth two solemn feasts shall be

In every month, at which some history
Shall crown our joyance ; and this day, indeed,
I have a story ready for our need,
If ye will hear it, though perchance it is
That many things therein are writ amiss,
This part forgotten, that part grown too great,
For these things, too, are in the hands of fate.'

They cried aloud for joy to hear him speak ;
And as again the sinking sun did break
Through the dark clouds and blazed adown the hall,
His clear, thin voice upon their ears did fall,
Telling a tale of times long passed away,
When men might cross a kingdom in a day,
And kings remembered they should one day die,
And all folk dwelt in great simplicity.

ATALANTA'S RACE.

ARGUMENT.

ATALANTA, daughter of King Schœneus, not willing to lose her virgin's estate, made it a law to all suitors that they should run a race with her in the public place, and if they failed to overcome her should die unrevenged; and thus many brave men perished. At last came Milanion, the son of Amphidamas, who, outrunning her with the help of Venus, gained the virgin and wedded her.

I.

THROUGH thick Arcadian woods a hunter went,
Following the beasts up, on a fresh spring day;
But since his horn-tipped bow, but seldom bent,
Now at the noontide naught had happed to slay,
Within a vale he called his hounds away,
Hearkening the echoes of his lone voice cling
About the cliffs and through the beech-trees ring.

But when they ended, still awhile he stood,
And but the sweet familiar thrush could hear,

And all the day-long noises of the wood,
And o'er the dry leaves of the vanished year
His hounds' feet pattering as they drew anear,
And heavy breathing from their heads low hung,
To see the mighty cornel bow unstrung

Then smiling did he turn to leave the place,
But with his first step some new fleeting thought
A shadow cast across his sunburnt face:
I think the golden net that April brought
From some warm world his wavering soul had caught;
For, sunk in vague sweet longing, did he go
Betwixt the trees with doubtful steps and slow.

Yet howsoever slow he went, at last
The trees grew sparser, and the wood was done;
Whereon one farewell, backward look he cast,
Then, turning round to see what place was won,
With shaded eyes looked underneath the sun,
And o'er green meads and new-turned furrows brown
Beheld the gleaming of King Schœneus' town.

So thitherward he turned, and on each side
The folk were busy on the teeming land,
And man and maid from the brown furrows cried,
Or midst the newly blossomed vines did stand,
And as the rustic weapon pressed the hand
Thought of the nodding of the well-filled ear,
Or how the knife the heavy bunch should shear.

Merry it was: about him sung the birds,
The spring flowers bloomed along the firm dry road,
The sleek-skinned mothers of the sharp-horned herds
Now for the barefoot milking-maidens lowed;
While from the freshness of his blue abode,

Glad his death-bearing arrows to forget,
The broad sun blazed, nor scattered plagues as yet.

Through such fair things unto the gates he came,
And found them open, as though peace were there;
Wherethrough, unquestioned of his race or name,
He entered, and along the streets 'gan fare,
Which at the first of folk were wellnigh bare;
But pressing on, and going more hastily,
Men hurrying too he 'gan at last to see.

Following the last of these, he still pressed on,
Until an open space he came unto,
Where wreaths of fame had oft been lost and won,
For feats of strength folk there were wont to do.
And now our hunter looked for something new,
Because the whole wide space was bare, and stilled
The high seats were, with eager people filled.

There with the others to a seat he gat,
Whence he beheld a broidered canopy,
'Neath which in fair array King Schœneus sat
Upon his throne with councillors thereby;
And underneath his well-wrought seat and high,
He saw a golden image of the Sun,
A silver image of the fleet foot one.

A brazen altar stood beneath their feet
Whereon a thin flame flickered in the wind;
Nigh this a herald clad in raiment meet
Made ready even now his horn to wind,
By whom a huge man held a sword, intwined
With yellow flowers; these stood a little space
From off the altar, nigh the starting-place.

And there two runners did the sign abide,
Foot set to foot, — a young man slim and fair,
Crisp-haired, well-knit, with firm limbs often tried
In places where no man his strength may spare ;
Dainty his thin coat was, and on his hair
A golden circlet of renown he wore,
And in his hand an olive garland bore.

But on this day with whom shall he contend?
A maid stood by him like Diana clad
When in the woods she lists her bow to bend,
Too fair for one to look on and be glad,
Who scarcely yet has thirty summers had,
If he must still behold her from afar ;
Too fair to let the world live free from war.

She seemed all earthly matters to forget ;
Of all tormenting lines her face was clear,
Her wide gray eyes upon the goal were set
Calm and unmoved as though no soul were near.
But her foe trembled as a man in fear,
Nor from her loveliness one moment turned
His anxious face with fierce desire that burned.

Now through the hush there broke the trumpet's clang
Just as the setting sun made eventide.
Then from light feet a spurt of dust there sprang,
And swiftly were they running side by side ;
But silent did the thronging folk abide
Until the turning-post was reached at last,
And round about it still abreast they passed.

But when the people saw how close they ran,
When half-way to the starting-point they were,
A cry of joy broke forth, whereat the man
Headed the white-foot runner, and drew near

Unto the very end of all his fear;
And scarce his straining feet the ground could feel,
And bliss unhoped-for o'er his heart 'gan steal.

But midst the loud victorious shouts he heard
Her footsteps drawing nearer, and the sound
Of fluttering raiment, and thereat afeard
His flushed and eager face he turned around,
And even then he felt her past him bound
Fleet as the wind, but scarcely saw her there
Till on the goal she laid her fingers fair.

There stood she breathing like a little child
Amid some warlike clamor laid asleep,
For no victorious joy her red lips smiled,
Her cheek its wonted freshness did but keep;
No glance lit up her clear gray eyes and deep,
Though some divine thought softened all her face
As once more rang the trumpet through the place.

But her late foe stopped short amidst his course,
One moment gazed upon her piteously,
Then with a groan his lingering feet did force
To leave the spot whence he her eyes could see;
And, changed like one who knows his time must be
But short and bitter, without any word
He knelt before the bearer of the sword;

Then high rose up the gleaming deadly blade,
Bared of its flowers, and through the crowded place
Was silence now, and midst of it the maid
Went by the poor wretch at a gentle pace,
And he to hers upturned his sad white face;
Nor did his eyes behold another sight
Ere on his soul there fell eternal night.

II.

So was the pageant ended, and all folk
Talking of this and that familiar thing
In little groups from that sad concourse broke;
For now the shrill bats were upon the wing,
And soon dark night would slay the evening,
And in dark gardens sang the nightingale
Her little-heeded, oft-repeated tale.

And with the last of all the hunter went,
Who, wondering at the strange sight he had seen,
Prayed an old man to tell him what it meant,
Both why the vanquished man so slain had been,
And if the maiden were an earthly queen,
Or rather what much more she seemed to be,
No sharer in the world's mortality.

'Stranger,' said he, 'I pray she soon may die
Whose lovely youth has slain so many an one!
King Schœneus' daughter is she verily,
Who when her eyes first looked upon the sun
Was fain to end her life but new begun,
For he had vowed to leave but men alone
Sprung from his loins when he from earth was gone.

'Therefore he bade one leave her in the wood,
And let wild things deal with her as they might;
But this being done, some cruel god thought good
To save her beauty in the world's despite:
Folk say that her, so delicate and white
As now she is, a rough root-grubbing bear
Amidst her shapeless cubs at first did rear.

'In course of time the woodfolk slew her nurse,
And to their rude abode the youngling brought,
And reared her up to be a kingdom's curse,
Who, grown a woman, of no kingdom thought,
But armed and swift, mid beasts destruction wrought,
Nor spared two shaggy centaur kings to slay,
To whom her body seemed an easy prey.

'So to this city, led by fate, she came,
Whom, known by signs, whereof I cannot tell,
King Schœneus for his child at last did claim;
Nor otherwhere since that day doth she dwell,
Sending too many a noble soul to hell. —
What! thine eyes glisten? what then! thinkest thou
Her shining head unto the yoke to bow?

'Listen, my son, and love some other maid,
For she the saffron gown will never wear,
And on no flower-strewn couch shall she be laid,
Nor shall her voice make glad a lover's ear;
Yet if of Death thou hast not any fear,
Yea, rather, if thou lovest him utterly,
Thou still mayst woo her ere thou comest to die,

'Like him that on this day thou sawest lie dead;
For, fearing as I deem the sea-born one,
The maid has vowed e'en such a man to wed
As in the course her swift feet can outrun,
But whoso fails herein, his days are done:
He came the nighest that was slain to-day,
Although with him I deem she did but play.

'Behold, such mercy Atalanta gives
To those that long to win her loveliness;
Be wise! be sure that many a maid there lives
Gentler than she, of beauty little less,

Whose swimming eyes thy loving words shall bless,
When in some garden, knee set close to knee,
Thou sing'st the song that love may teach to thee.'

So to the hunter spake that ancient man,
And left him for his own home presently;
But he turned round, and through the moonlight wan
Reached the thick wood, and there 'twixt tree and tree
Distraught he passed the long night feverishly,
'Twixt sleep and waking, and at dawn arose
To wage hot war against his speechless foes.

There to the hart's flank seemed his shaft to grow,
As panting down the broad green glades he flew,
There by his horn the Dryads well might know
His thrust against the bear's heart had been true,
And there Adonis' bane his javelin slew;
But still in vain through rough and smooth he went,
For none the more his restlessness was spent.

So wandering, he to Argive cities came,
And in the lists with valiant men he stood,
And by great deeds he won him praise and fame,
And heaps of wealth for little-valued blood;
But none of all these things, or life, seemed good
Unto his heart, where still unsatisfied
A ravenous longing warred with fear and pride.

Therefore it happed when but a month had gone
Since he had left King Schœneus' city old,
In hunting-gear again, again alone
The forest-bordered meads did he behold,
Where still mid thoughts of August's quivering gold
Folk hoed the wheat, and clipped the vine in trust
Of faint October's purple-foaming must.

And once again he passed the peaceful gate,
While to his beating heart his lips did lie,
That, owning not victorious love and fate,
Said, half aloud, 'And here too must I try
To win of alien men the mastery,
And gather for my head fresh meed of fame,
And cast new glory on my father's name.'

In spite of that, how beat his heart when first
Folk said to him, 'And art thou come to see
That which still makes our city's name accurst
Among all mothers for its cruelty?
Then know indeed that fate is good to thee,
Because to-morrow a new luckless one
Against the white-foot maid is pledged to run.'

So on the morrow with no curious eyes,
As once he did, that piteous sight he saw,
Nor did that wonder in his heart arise
As toward the goal the conquering maid 'gan draw,
Nor did he gaze upon her eyes with awe, —
Too full the pain of longing filled his heart
For fear or wonder there to have a part.

But O, how long the night was ere it went!
How long it was before the dawn begun
Showed to the wakening birds the sun's intent
That not in darkness should the world be done!
And then, and then, how long before the sun
Bade silently the toilers of the earth
Get forth to fruitless cares or empty mirth!

And long it seemed that in the market-place
He stood and saw the chaffering folk go by,
Ere from the ivory throne King Schœneus' face

Looked down upon the murmur royally;
But then came trembling that the time was nigh
When he midst pitying looks his love must claim,
And jeering voices must salute his name.

But as the throng he pierced to gain the throne,
His alien face distraught and anxious told
What hopeless errand he was bound upon,
And, each to each, folk whispered to behold
His godlike limbs; nay, and one woman old,
As he went by, must pluck him by the sleeve
And pray him yet that wretched love to leave.

For sidling up she said, 'Canst thou live twice,
Fair son? Canst thou have joyful youth again,
That thus thou goest to the sacrifice,
Thyself the victim? Nay, then, all in vain
Thy mother bore her longing and her pain,
And one more maiden on the earth must dwell
Hopeless of joy, nor fearing death and hell.

'O fool, thou knowest not the compact then
That with the three-formed goddess she has made
To keep her from the loving lips of men,
And in no saffron gown to be arrayed,
And therewithal with glory to be paid,
And love of her the moonlit river sees
White 'gainst the shadow of the formless trees.

'Come back, and I myself will pray for thee
Unto the sea-born framer of delights,
To give thee her who on the earth may be
The fairest stirrer-up to death and fights,
To quench with hopeful days and joyous nights
The flame that doth thy youthful heart consume:
Come back, nor give thy beauty to the tomb.'

How should he listen to her earnest speech, —
Words such as he not once or twice had said
Unto himself, whose meaning scarce could reach
The firm abode of that sad hardihead?
He turned about, and through the marketstead
Swiftly he passed, until before the throne
In the cleared space he stood at last alone.

Then said the king, 'Stranger, what dost thou here?
Have any of my folk done ill to thee?
Or art thou of the forest men in fear?
Or art thou of the sad fraternity
Who still will strive my daughter's mates to be,
Staking their lives to win to earthly bliss
The lonely maid, the friend of Artemis?'

'O king,' he said, 'thou sayest the word indeed;
Nor will I quit the strife till I have won
My sweet delight, or death to end my need.
And know that I am called Milanion,
Of King Amphidamas the well-loved son;
So fear not that to thy old name, O king,
Much loss or shame my victory will bring.'

'Nay, prince,' said Schœneus, 'welcome to this land
Thou wert indeed, if thou wert here to try
Thy strength 'gainst some one mighty of his hand;
Nor would we grudge thee well-won mastery.
But now, why wilt thou come to me to die,
And at my door lay down thy luckless head,
Swelling the band of the unhappy dead,

'Whose curses even now my heart doth fear?
Lo, I am old, and know what life can be,
And what a bitter thing is death anear.

O son ! be wise, and hearken unto me ;
And if no other can be dear to thee,
At least as now, yet is the world full wide,
And bliss in seeming hopeless hearts may hide :

'But if thou losest life, then all is lost.'
'Nay, king,' Milanion said, 'thy words are vain.
Doubt not that I have counted well the cost.
But say, on what day wilt thou that I gain
Fulfilled delight, or death to end my pain?
Right glad were I if it could be to-day,
And all my doubts at rest forever lay.'

'Nay,' said King Schœneus, 'thus it shall not be,
But rather shalt thou let a month go by,
And weary with thy prayers for victory
What god thou know'st the kindest and most nigh.
So doing, still perchance thou shalt not die ;
And with my good-will wouldst thou have the maid,
For of the equal gods I grow afraid.

'And until then, O prince, be thou my guest,
And all these troublous things awhile forget.'
'Nay,' said he, 'couldst thou give my soul good rest,
And on mine head a sleepy garland set,
Then had I 'scaped the meshes of the net,
Nor shouldst thou hear from me another word ;
But now, make sharp thy fearful heading sword.

'Yet will I do what son of man may do,
And promise all the gods may most desire,
That to myself I may at least be true ;
And on that day my heart and limbs so tire,
With utmost strain and measureless desire,
That, at the worst, I may but fall asleep
When in the sunlight round that sword shall sweep.'

He went with that, nor anywhere would bide,
But unto Argos restlessly did wend;
And there, as one who lays all hope aside,
Because the leech has said his life must end,
Silent farewell he bade to foe and friend,
And took his way unto the restless sea,
For there he deemed his rest and help might be.

III.

Upon the shore of Argolis there stands
A temple to the goddess that he sought,
That, turned unto the lion-bearing lands,
Fenced from the east, of cold winds hath no thought,
Though to no homestead there the sheaves are brought,
No groaning press torments the close-clipped murk,
Lonely the fane stands, far from all men's work.

Pass through a close, set thick with myrtle-trees,
Through the brass doors that guard the holy place,
And, entering, hear the washing of the seas
That twice a day rise high above the base,
And, with the southwest urging them, embrace
The marble feet of her that standeth there,
That shrink not, naked though they be and fair.

Small is the fane through which the sea-wind sings
About Queen Venus' well-wrought image white;
But hung around are many precious things,
The gifts of those who, longing for delight,
Have hung them there within the goddess' sight,
And in return have taken at her hands
The living treasures of the Grecian lands.

And thither now has come Milanion,
And showed unto the priests' wide-open eyes
Gifts fairer than all those that there have shone, —
Silk cloths, inwrought with Indian fantasies,
And bowls inscribed with sayings of the wise
Above the deeds of foolish living things,
And mirrors fit to be the gifts of kings.

And now before the sea-born one he stands,
By the sweet veiling smoke made dim and soft;
And while the incense trickles from his hands,
And while the odorous smoke-wreaths hang aloft,
Thus doth he pray to her: 'O thou who oft
Hast holpen man and maid in their distress,
Despise me not for this my wretchedness!

'O goddess, among us who dwell below,
Kings and great men, great for a little while,
Have pity on the lowly heads that bow,
Nor hate the hearts that love them without guile;
Wilt thou be worse than these, and is thy smile
A vain device of him who set thee here,
An empty dream of some artificer?

'O great one, some men love, and are ashamed;
Some men are weary of the bonds of love;
Yea, and by some men lightly art thou blamed,
That from thy toils their lives they cannot move,
And mid the ranks of men their manhood prove.
Alas! O goddess, if thou slayest me
What new immortal can I serve but thee?

'Think then, will it bring honor to thy head
If folk say, "Everything aside he cast,
And to all fame and honor was he dead,

And to his one hope now is dead at last,
Since all unholpen he is gone and past:
Ah! the gods love not man, for certainly
He to his helper did not cease to cry."

'Nay, but thou wilt help: they who died before
Not single-hearted, as I deem, came here;
Therefore unthanked they laid their gifts before
Thy stainless feet, still shivering with their fear,
Lest in their eyes their true thought might appear,
Who sought to be the lords of that fair town,
Dreaded of men and winners of renown.

'O queen, thou knowest I pray not for this:
O, set us down together in some place
Where not a voice can break our heaven of bliss,
Where naught but rocks and I can see her face,
Softening beneath the marvel of thy grace,
Where not a foot our vanished steps can track, —
The golden age, the golden age come back!

'O fairest, hear me now, who do thy will,
Plead for thy rebel that she be not slain,
But live and love and be thy servant still:
Ah! give her joy and take away my pain,
And thus two long-enduring servants gain.
An easy thing this is to do for me,
What need of my vain words to weary thee?

'But none the less this place will I not leave
Until I needs must go my death to meet,
Or at thy hands some happy sign receive
That in great joy we twain may one day greet
Thy presence here and kiss thy silver feet,
Such as we deem thee, fair beyond all words,
Victorious o'er our servants and our lords.'

Then from the altar back a space he drew,
But from the queen turned not his face away,
But 'gainst a pillar leaned, until the blue
That arched the sky, at ending of the day,
Was turned to ruddy gold and changing gray,
And clear, but low, the nigh-ebbed windless sea
In the still evening murmured ceaselessly.

And there he stood when all the sun was down;
Nor had he moved when the dim golden light,
Like the far lustre of a godlike town,
Had left the world to seeming hopeless night;
Nor would he move the more when wan moonlight
Streamed through the pillars for a little while,
And lighted up the white queen's changeless smile.

Naught noted he the shallow flowing sea,
As step by step it set the wrack a-swim;
The yellow torchlight nothing noted he
Wherein with fluttering gown and half-bared limb
The temple damsels sung their midnight hymn;
And naught the doubled stillness of the fane
When they were gone and all was hushed again.

But when the waves had touched the marble base,
And steps the fish swim over twice a day,
The dawn beheld him sunken in his place
Upon the floor; and sleeping there he lay,
Not heeding aught the little jets of spray
The roughened sea brought nigh, across him cast,
For as one dead all thought from him had passed.

Yet long before the sun had showed his head,
Long ere the varied hangings on the wall
Had gained once more their blue and green and red,

He rose as one some well-known sign doth call
When war upon the city's gates doth fall,
And scarce like one fresh risen out of sleep,
He 'gan again his broken watch to keep.

Then he turned round; not for the sea-gull's cry
That wheeled above the temple in his flight,
Not for the fresh south-wind that lovingly
Breathed on the new-born day and dying night,
But some strange hope 'twixt fear and great delight
Drew round his face, now flushed, now pale and wan,
And still constrained his eyes the sea to scan.

Now a faint light lit up the southern sky, —
Not sun or moon, for all the world was gray,
But this a bright cloud seemed, that drew anigh,
Lighting the dull waves that beneath it lay
As toward the temple still it took its way,
And still grew greater, till Milanion
Saw naught for dazzling light that round him shone.

But as he staggered with his arms outspread,
Delicious unnamed odors breathed around;
For languid happiness he bowed his head,
And with wet eyes sank down upon the ground,
Nor wished for aught, nor any dream he found
To give him reason for that happiness,
Or make him ask more knowledge of his bliss.

At last his eyes were cleared, and he could see
Through happy tears the goddess face to face
With that faint image of divinity,
Whose well-wrought smile and dainty changeless grace
Until that morn so gladdened all the place;
Then he unwitting cried aloud her name,
And covered up his eyes for fear and shame.

But through the stillness he her voice could hear
Piercing his heart with joy scarce bearable,
That said, 'Milanion, wherefore dost thou fear?
I am not hard to those who love me well;
List to what I a second time will tell,
And thou mayest hear perchance, and live to save
The cruel maiden from a loveless grave.

'See, by my feet three golden apples lie, —
Such fruit among the heavy roses falls,
Such fruit my watchful damsels carefully
Store up within the best loved of my walls,
Ancient Damascus, where the lover calls
Above my unseen head, and faint and light
The rose-leaves flutter round me in the night.

'And note that these are not alone most fair
With heavenly gold, but longing strange they bring
Unto the hearts of men, who will not care,
Beholding these, for any once-loved thing
Till round the shining sides their fingers cling.
And thou shalt see thy well-girt swiftfoot maid
By sight of these amid her glory stayed.

'For bearing these within a scrip with thee,
When first she heads thee from the starting-place
Cast down the first one for her eyes to see,
And when she turns aside make on apace,
And if again she heads thee in the race
Spare not the other two to cast aside
If she not long enough behind will bide.

'Farewell, and when has come the happy time
That she Diana's raiment must unbind,
And all the world seems blessed with Saturn's clime,

And thou with eager arms about her twined
Beholdest first her gray eyes growing kind,
Surely, O trembler, thou shalt scarcely then
Forget the helper of unhappy men.'

Milanion raised his head at this last word,
For now so soft and kind she seemed to be
No longer of her godhead was he feared;
Too late he looked, for nothing could he see
But the white image glimmering doubtfully
In the departing twilight cold and gray,
And those three apples on the steps that lay.

These then he caught up, quivering with delight,
Yet fearful lest it all might be a dream,
And though aweary with the watchful night,
And sleepless nights of longing, still did deem
He could not sleep; but yet the first sunbeam
That smote the fane across the heaving deep
Shone on him laid in calm untroubled sleep.

But little ere the noontide did he rise,
And why he felt so happy scarce could tell
Until the gleaming apples met his eyes.
Then, leaving the fair place where this befell,
Oft he looked back as one who loved it well,
Then homeward to the haunts of men 'gan wend
To bring all things unto a happy end.

IV.

Now has the lingering month at last gone by,
Again are all folk round the running-place.
Nor other seems the dismal pageantry

Than heretofore, but that another face
Looks o'er the smooth course ready for the race,
For now, beheld of all, Milanion
Stands on the spot he twice has looked upon.

But yet — what change is this that holds the maid?
Does she indeed see in his glittering eye
More than disdain of the sharp shearing blade,
Some happy hope of help and victory?
The others seemed to say, 'We come to die;
Look down upon us for a little while,
That, dead, we may bethink us of thy smile.'

But he — what look of mastery was this
He cast on her? Why were his lips so red?
Why was his face so flushed with happiness?
So looks not one who deems himself but dead,
E'en if to death he bows a willing head;
So rather looks a god well pleased to find
Some earthly damsel fashioned to his mind.

Why must she drop her lids before his gaze,
And even as she casts adown her eyes
Redden to note his eager glance of praise,
And wish that she were clad in other guise?
Why must the memory to her heart arise
Of things unnoticed when they first were heard,
Some lover's song, some answering maiden's word?

What makes these longings, vague, without a name,
And this vain pity never felt before,
This sudden languor, this contempt of fame,
This tender sorrow for the time passed o'er,
These doubts that grow each minute more and more?

Why does sne tremble as the time grows near,
And weak defeat and woful victory fear?

But while she seemed to hear her beating heart,
Above their heads the trumpet blast rang out,
And forth they sprang; and she must play her part.
Then flew her white feet, knowing not a doubt,
Though, slackening once, she turned her head about,
But then she cried aloud and faster fled
Than e'er before, and all men deemed him dead.

But with no sound he raised aloft his hand,
And thence what seemed a ray of light there flew
And past the maid rolled on along the sand;
Then trembling she her feet together drew,
And in her heart a strong desire there grew
To have the toy: some god she thought had given
That gift to her, to make of earth a heaven.

Then from the course with eager steps she ran,
And in her odorous bosom laid the gold.
But when she turned again, the great-limbed man
Now well ahead she failed not to behold,
And, mindful of her glory waxing cold,
Sprang up and followed him in hot pursuit,
Though with one hand she touched the golden fruit.

Note, too, the bow that she was wont to bear
She laid aside to grasp the glittering prize,
And o'er her shoulder from the quiver fair
Three arrows fell and lay before her eyes
Unnoticed, as amidst the people's cries
She sprang to head the strong Milanion,
Who now the turning-post had wellnigh won.

But as he set his mighty hand on it,
White fingers underneath his own were laid,
And white limbs from his dazzled eyes did flit;
Then he the second fruit cast by the maid,
But she ran on awhile, then as afraid
Wavered and stopped, and turned and made no stay
Until the globe with its bright fellow lay.

Then, as a troubled glance she cast around,
Now far ahead the Argive could she see,
And in her garment's hem one hand she wound
To keep the double prize, and strenuously
Sped o'er the course, and little doubt had she
To win the day, though now but scanty space
Was left betwixt him and the winning-place.

Short was the way unto such winged feet;
Quickly she gained upon him, till at last
He turned about her eager eyes to meet,
And from his hand the third fair apple cast.
She wavered not, but turned and ran so fast
After the prize that should her bliss fulfil,
That in her hand it lay ere it was still.

Nor did she rest, but turned about to win
Once more an unblest woful victory —
And yet — and yet — why does her breath begin
To fail her, and her feet drag heavily?
Why fails she now to see if far or nigh
The goal is? Why do her gray eyes grow dim?
Why do these tremors run through every limb?

She spreads her arms abroad some stay to find,
Else must she fall indeed and findeth this,
A strong man's arms about her body twined.

Nor may she shudder now to feel his kiss,
So wrapped she is in new unbroken bliss;
Made happy that the foe the prize hath won,
She weeps glad tears for all her glory done.

V.

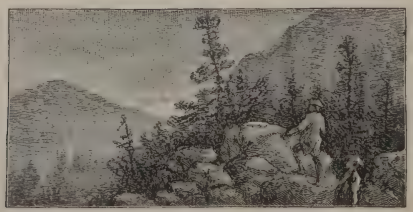
Shatter the trumpet, hew adown the posts!
Upon the brazen altar break the sword,
And scatter incense to appease the ghosts
Of those who died here by their own award.
Bring forth the image of the mighty lord,
And her who unseen o'er the runners hung,
And did a deed forever to be sung.

Here are the gathered folk; make no delay,
Open King Schœneus' well-filled treasury,
Bring out the gifts long hid from light of day, —
The golden bowls o'erwrought with imagery,
Gold chains, and unguents brought from over sea,
The saffron gown the old Phœnician brought,
Within the temple of the goddess wrought.

O ye, O damsels, who shall never see
Her, that Love's servant bringeth now to you,
Returning from another victory,
In some cool bower do all that now is due!
Since she in token of her service new
Shall give to Venus offerings rich enow, —
Her maiden zone, her arrows, and her bow.

INTERLUDE.

So when his last word's echo died away,
The growing wind at end of that wild day
Alone they heard, for silence bound them all;
Yea, on their hearts a weight had seemed to fall,
As unto the scarce-hoped felicity
The tale drew round, — the end of life so nigh,
The aim so little, and the joy so vain, —
For as a child's unmeasured joy brings pain
Unto a grown man holding grief at bay,
So the old fervent story of that day
Brought pain half-sweet to these: till now the fire
Upon the hearth sent up a flickering spire
Of ruddy flame, as fell the burned-through logs,
And, waked by sudden silence, gray old dogs,
The friends of this or that man, rose and fawned
On hands they knew; withal once more there dawned
The light of common day on those old hearts,
And all were ready now to play their parts,
And take what feeble joy might yet remain
In place of all they once had hoped to gain.



APRIL.

O fair midspring, besung so oft and oft,
How can I praise thy loveliness enow?
Thy sun that burns not, and thy breezes soft
That o'er the blossoms of the orchard blow,
The thousand things that 'neath the young leaves grow,
The hopes and chances of the growing year,
Winter forgotten long, and summer near.

When summer brings the lily and the rose,
She brings us fear; her very death she brings
Hid in her anxious heart, the forge of woes;
And, dull with fear, no more the mavis sings.
But thou! thou diest not, but thy fresh life clings
About the fainting autumn's sweet decay,
When in the earth the hopeful seed they lay.

Ah! life of all the year, why yet do I,
Amid thy snowy blossoms' fragrant drift,
Still long for that which never draweth nigh,
Striving my pleasure from my pain to sift,
Some weight from off my fluttering mirth to lift? —
Now, when far bells are ringing, 'Come again,
Come back, past years! why will ye pass in vain?'

PRELUDE TO THE PROUD KING.

When April-tide was melting into May,
Within a hall that midst the gardens lay
These elders met, and having feasted well,
The time came round the wonted tale to tell.
Then spake a Wanderer: 'Sirs, it happed to me,
Long years agone, to cross the narrow sea
That 'twixt us Drontheimers and England lies;
Young was I then, and little thought these eyes
Should see so many lands ere all was done.
'But this land was a fair and fertile one,
As at that time, for April-tide it was,
Even as now; well, sirs, it came to pass
That to this town or that we took our way,
Or in some abbey's guesten-chamber lay,
And many tales we heard, some false, some true,
Of the ill deeds our fathers used to do
Within that land; and still the tale would end,
"Yet did the Saint his Holy House defend;"
Or, "Sirs, their fury all was naught and vain,
And by our Earl the pirate-king was slain."
God wot, I laughed full often in my sleeve,
And could have told them stories, by their leave,
With other endings; but I held my tongue.
Let each king's deeds in his own land be sung,
And then will lies stretch far. Besides, these men
Were puffed up with their luck and glory then;
For at that tide, within the land of France,
Unto their piping must all people dance. —
But let that pass, for Captain Rolf has told
How, on the way, their king he did behold.

'For other tales they told, and one of these
Not all the washing of the troublous seas,
Not all the changeful days whereof ye know,
Have swept from out my memory; even so
Small things far off will be remembered clear
When matters both more weighty and more near
Are waxing dim to us. I, who have seen
So many lands, and midst such marvels been,
Clearer than these abodes of outland men
Can see above the green and unburnt fen
The little houses of an English town,
Cross-timbered, thatched with fen-reeds coarse and brown,
And, high o'er these, three gables, great and fair,
That slender rods of columns do upbear
Over the minster doors, and imagery
Of kings, and flowers no summer field doth see,
Wrought on those gables. — Yea, I heard withal,
In the fresh morning air, the trowels fall
Upon the stone, a thin noise far away;
For high up wrought the masons on that day,
Since to the monks that house seemed scarcely well
Till they had set a spire or pinnacle
Each side the great porch. In that burgh I heard
This tale, and late have set down every word
That I remembered when the thoughts would come
Of what we did in our deserted home,
And of the days, long past, when we were young,
Nor knew the cloudy woes that o'er us hung.
And howsoever I am now grown old,
Yet is it still the tale I then heard told
Within the guest-house of that minster-close
Whose walls, like cliffs new made, before us rose.'

THE PROUD KING.

ARGUMENT.

A CERTAIN king, blinded by pride, thought that he was something more than man, if not equal to God; but such a judgment fell on him that none knew him for king, and he suffered many things, till in the end, humbling himself, he regained his kingdom and honor.

I.

In a far country that I cannot name,
And on a year long ages passed away,
A king there dwelt, in rest and ease and fame,
And richer than the emperor is to-day:
The very thought of what this man might say
From dusk to dawn kept many a lord awake,
For fear of him did many a great man quake.

Young was he when he first sat on the throne,
And he was wedded to a noble wife,
But at the daïs must he sit alone,
Nor durst a man speak to him for his life,
Except with leave: naught knew he change or strife,
But that the years passed silently away,
And in his black beard gathered specks of gray.

Now so it chanced, upon a May morning,
Wakeful he lay when yet low was the sun,
Looking distraught at many a royal thing,
And counting up his titles one by one,
And thinking much of things that he had done;
For full of life he felt, and hale and strong,
And knew that none durst say when he did wrong.

For no man now could give him dread or doubt,
The land was 'neath his sceptre far and wide,
And at his beck would well-armed myriads shout.
Then swelled his vain, unthinking heart with pride,
Until at last he raised him up and cried,
'What need have I for temple or for priest?
Am I not God, whiles that I live at least?'

And yet withal that dead his fathers were,
He needs must think that quick the years pass by;
But he, who seldom yet had seen Death near
Or heard his name, said, 'Still I may not die,
Though underneath the earth my fathers lie;
My sire indeed was called a mighty king,
Yet, in regard of mine, a little thing

'His kingdom was; moreover his grandsire
To him was but a prince of narrow lands,
Whose father, though to things he did aspire
Beyond most men, a great knight of his hands,
Yet ruled some little town where now there stands
The kennel of my dogs; then may not I
Rise higher yet, nor like poor wretches die?

'Since up the ladder ever we have gone
Step after step, nor fallen back again;
And there are tales of people who have won
A life enduring, without care or pain,
Or any man to make their wishes vain:
Perchance this prize unwitting now I hold;
For times change fast, the world is waxen old.'

So mid these thoughts once more he fell asleep,
And when he woke again, high was the sun;
Then quickly from his gold bed did he leap,

And of his former thoughts remembered none,
But said, 'To-day through green woods will we run,
Nor shall to-day be worse than yesterday,
But better it may be, for game and play.'

So for the hunt was he apparelled,
And forth he rode with heart right well at ease;
And many a strong, deep-chested hound they led
Over the dewy grass betwixt the trees,
And fair white horses fit for the white knees
Of her the ancients fabled rides anights
Betwixt the setting and the rising lights.

Now following up a mighty hart and swift
The king rode long upon that morning-tide;

And since his horse was worth a kingdom's gift,
It chanced him all his servants to outride,
Until unto a shaded river-side
He came alone at hottest of the sun,
When all the freshness of the day was done.

Dismounting there, and seeing so far adown
The red-finned fishes o'er the gravel play,
It seemed that moment worth his royal crown
To hide there from the burning of the day,
Wherefore he did off all his rich array,
And tied his horse unto a neighboring tree,
And in the water sported leisurely.

But when he was fulfilled of this delight
He gat him to the bank well satisfied,
And thought to do on him his raiment bright
And homeward to his royal house to ride;
But 'mazed and angry, looking far and wide,
Naught saw he of his horse and rich attire,
And 'gainst the thief 'gan threaten vengeance dire.

But little help his fury was to him,
So lustily he 'gan to shout and cry.
None answered; still the lazy chub did swim
By inches 'gainst the stream; away did fly
The small pied bird, but nathless stayed anigh,
And o'er the stream still plied his fluttering trade,
Of such a helpless man not much afraid.

Weary of crying in that lonely place,
He ceased at last, and thinking what to do,
E'en as he was, up stream he set his face,
Since not far off a certain house he knew
Where dwelt his ranger, a lord leal and true,

Who many a bounty at his hands had had,
And now to do him ease would be right glad.

Thither he hastened on; and as he went
The hot sun sorely burned his naked skin,
The whiles he thought, 'When he to me has lent
Fine raiment, and at ease I sit within
His coolest chamber clad in linen thin,
And drinking wine, the best that he has got,
I shall forget this troublous day and hot.'

Now note that while he thus was on his way,
And still his people for their master sought,
There met them one who in the king's array
Bestrode his very horse, and as they thought
Was none but he in good time to them brought,
Therefore they hailed him king, and so all rode
From out the forest to his fair abode.

And there in royal guise he sat at meat,
Served, as his wont was, 'neath the canopy,
And there the hounds fawned round about his feet,
And there that city's elders did he see,
And with his lords took counsel what should be ;
And there at supper when the day waxed dim
The queen within his chamber greeted him.

II.

Leave we him there ; for to the ranger's gate
The other came, and on the horn he blew,
Till peered the wary porter through the grate
To see if he, perchance, the blower knew,
Before he should the wicket-gate undo ;
But when he saw him standing there, he cried,
'What dost thou, friend, to show us all thine hide?

'We list not buy to-day or flesh or fell ;
Go home and get thyself a shirt at least,
If thou wouldst aught, for saith our vicar well
That God hath given clothes e'en to the beast.'
Therewith he turned to go ; but, as he ceased,
The king cried out, 'Open, O foolish man !
I am thy lord and king, Jovinian.

'Go now, and tell thy master I am here
Desiring food and clothes, and in this plight,
And then hereafter need'st thou have no fear,
Because thou didst not know me at first sight.'
'Yea, yea, I am but dreaming in the night,'
The carle said, 'and I bid thee, friend, to dream :
Come through ! here is no gate, it doth but seem.'

With that his visage vanished from the grate;
But when the king now found himself alone,
He hurled himself against the mighty gate,
And beat upon it madly with a stone,
Half wondering, midst his rage, how any one
Could live, if longed-for things he chanced to lack;
But midst all this, at last the gate flew back,

And there the porter stood, brown-bill in hand,
And said, 'Ah, fool, thou makest this ado,
Wishing before my lord's high seat to stand;
Thou shalt be gladder soon hereby to go,
Or surely naught of handy blows I know.
Come, willy nilly, thou shalt tell this tale
Unto my lord, if aught it may avail.'

With that his staff he handled, as if he
Would smite the king, and said, 'Get on before!
Saint Mary! now thou goest full leisurely,
Who erewhile fain wouldst batter down the door.
See now, if ere this matter is passed o'er,
I come to harm, yet thou shalt not escape;
Thy back is broad enow to pay thy jape.'

Half blind with rage the king before him passed,
But naught of all he doomed him to durst say,
Lest he from rest nigh won should yet be cast;
So with a swelling heart he took his way,
Thinking right soon his shame to cast away,
And the carle followed still, ill satisfied
With such a wretched losel to abide.

Fair was the ranger's house, and new and white,
And by the king built scarce a year agone,

And carved about for this same lord's delight
With woodland stories deftly wrought in stone ;
There oft the king was wont to come alone,
For much he loved this lord, who erst had been
A landless squire, a servant of the queen.

Now long a lord and clad in rich attire,
In his fair hall he sat before the wine,
Watching the evening sun's yet burning fire
Through the close branches of his pleasance shine,
In that mood when man thinks himself divine,
Remembering not whereto we all must come,
Not thinking aught but of his happy home.

From just outside loud mocking merriment
He heard midst this ; and therewithal a squire
Came hurrying up, his laughter scarcely spent,
Who said, 'My lord, a man in such attire
As Adam's ere he took the devil's hire,
Who saith that thou wilt know him for the king,
Up from the gate John Porter needs must bring.

'He to the king is nothing like in aught
But that his beard he weareth in such guise
As doth my lord : wilt thou that he be brought?
Perchance some treason 'neath his madness lies.'
'Yea,' saith the ranger, 'that may well be wise ;
But haste, for this eve am I well at ease,
Nor would be wearied with such folk as these.'

Then went the squire, and, coming back again,
The porter and the naked king brought in,
Who thinking now that this should end his pain,
Forgat his fury and the porter's sin,

And said, 'Thou wonderest how I came to win
This raiment, that kings long have ceased to wear,
Since Noah's flood has altered all the air?

'Well, thou shalt know; but first I pray thee, Hugh,
Reach me that cloak that lieth on the board,
For certes, though thy folk are leal and true,
It seemeth that they deem a mighty lord
Is made by crown, and silken robe, and sword:
Lo, such are borel folk; but thou and I
Fail not to know the signs of majesty.

'Thou risest not! thou lookest strange on me!
Ah! what is this? Who reigneth in my stead?
How long hast thou been plotting secretly?
Then slay me now, for if I be not dead
Armies will rise up when I nod my head.
Slay me! — or cast thy treachery away,
And have anew my favor from this day.'

'Why should I tell thee that thou ne'er wast king?'
The ranger said, 'thou knowest not what I say;
Poor man, I pray God help thee in this thing,
And, ere thou diest, send thee some good day;
Nor hence unholpen shalt thou go away.
Good fellows, this poor creature is but mad;
Take him, and in a coat let him be clad,

'And give him meat and drink, and on this night
Beneath some roof of ours let him abide,
For some day God may set his folly right.'
Then spread the king his arms abroad and cried,
'Woe to thy food, thy house, and thee betide,
Thou loathsome traitor! Get ye from the hall,
Lest smitten by God's hand this roof should fall!

'Yea, if the world be but an idle dream,
And God deals naught with it, yet shall ye see
Red flame from out these carven windows stream.
I — I will burn this vile place utterly,
And strewn with salt the poisonous earth shall be,
That such a wretch of such a man has made,
That so such Judases may grow afraid.'

Thus raving, those who held him he shook off
And rushed from out the hall, nigh mad indeed,
And gained the gate, not heeding blow or scoff,
Nor longer of his nakedness took heed,
But ran, he knew not where, at headlong speed,
Till, when at last his strength was fully spent,
Worn out, he fell beneath a woody bent.

But for the ranger, left alone in peace,
He bade his folk bring in the minstrelsy;
And thinking of his life, and fair increase
Of all his goods, a happy man was he,
And towards his master felt right lovingly,
And said, 'This luckless madman will avail,
When next I see the king, for one more tale.'

III.

Meanwhile the real king by the roadside lay,
Panting, confused, scarce knowing if he dreamed,
Until at last, when vanished was the day,
Through the dark night far off a bright light gleamed;
Which growing quickly, down the road there streamed
The glare of torches, held by men who ran
Before the litter of a mighty man.

These mixed with soldiers soon the road did fill,
And on their harness could the king behold
The badge of one erst wont to do his will,
A counsellor, a gatherer-up of gold,
Who underneath his rule had now grown old;
Then wrath and bitterness so filled his heart,
That from his wretched lair he needs must start,

And o'er the clatter shrilly did he cry,
'Well met, Duke Peter! ever art thou wise;
Surely thou wilt not let a day go by
Ere thou art good friends with mine enemies;
O fit to rule within a land of lies,
Go on thy journey, make thyself more meet
To sit in hell beneath the devil's feet!'

But as he ceased a soldier drew anear,
And smote him flatling with his sheathed sword,
And said, 'Speak louder, that my lord may hear,
And give thee wages for thy ribald word!
Come forth, for I must show thee to my lord,
For he may think thee more than mad indeed,
Who of men's ways hast taken wondrous heed.'

Now was the litter stayed midmost the road,
And round about the torches in a ring
Were gathered, and their flickering light now glowed
In gold and gems and many a lordly thing,
And showed that face well known unto the king,
That, smiling yesterday, right humble words
Had spoken midst the concourse of the lords.

But now he said, 'Man, thou wert cursing me,
If these folk heard aright; what wilt thou then?
Deem'st thou that I have done some wrong to thee,
Or hast thou scathe from any of my men?

In any case tell all thy tale again
When on the judgment-seat thou see'st me sit,
And I will give no careless ear to it.'

'The night is dark, and in the summer wind
The torches flicker; canst thou see my face?
Bid them draw nigher yet, and call to mind
Who gave thee all thy riches and thy place —
Well; if thou canst, deny me with such grace
As by the firelight Peter swore of old,
When in that Maundy-week the night was cold —

'Alas! canst thou not see I am the king?'
So spoke he, as their eyes met mid the blaze,
And the king saw the dread foreshadowing,
Within the elder's proud and stony gaze,
Of what those lips, thin with the lapse of days,
Should utter now; nor better it befell:
'Friend, a strange story thou art pleased to tell;

'Thy luck it is thou tellest it to me,
Who deem thee mad and let thee go thy way:
The king is not a man to pity thee,
Or on thy folly thy fool's tale to lay:
Poor fool! take this, and with the light of day
Buy food and raiment of some laboring clown,
And by my counsel keep thee from the town,

'For fear thy madness break out in some place
Where folk thy body to the judge must hale,
And then indeed wert thou in evil case —
Press on, sirs! or the time will not avail.'
There stood the king, with limbs that 'gan to fail,
Speechless, and holding in his trembling hand
A coin new stamped for people of the land;

Thereon, with sceptre, crown, and royal robe,
The image of a king, himself, was wrought;
His jewelled feet upon a quartered globe,
As though by him all men were vain and naught.
One moment the red glare the silver caught,
As the lord ceased; the next his hurrying folk
The flaring circle round the litter broke.

The next, their shadows barred a patch of light,
Fast vanishing, all else around was black;
And the poor wretch, left lonely with the night,
Muttered, 'I wish the day would ne'er come back,
If all that once I had I now must lack:
Ah, God! how long is it since I was king,
Nor lacked enough to wish for anything?'

Then down the lonely road he wandered yet,
Following the vanished lights, he scarce knew why,
Till he began his sorrows to forget,
And, steeped in drowsiness, at last drew nigh
A grassy bank, where worn with misery,
He slept the dreamless sleep of weariness,
That many a time such wretches' eyes will bless.

IV.

But at the dawn he woke, nor knew at first
What ugly chain of grief had brought him there,
Nor why he felt so wretched and accurst;
At last remembering, the fresh morning air,
The rising sun, and all things fresh and fair,
Yet caused some little hope in him to rise,
That end might come to these new miseries.

So looking round about, he saw that he
To his own city gates was come anear;
Then he arose and going warily,
And hiding now and then for very fear
Of folk who bore their goods and country cheer
Unto the city's market, at the last
Unto a stone's-throw of the gate he passed.

But when he drew unto the very gate,
Into the throng of country folk he came
Who for the opening of the door did wait,
Of whom some mocked, and some cried at him shame,
And some would know his country and his name;
But one into his wagon drew him up,
And gave him milk from out a beechen cup,

And asked him of his name and misery;
Then in his throat a swelling passion rose,
Which yet he swallowed down, and, 'Friend,' said he,
'Last night I had the hap to meet the foes
Of God and man, who robbed me, and with blows
Stripped off my weed and left me on the way:
Thomas the Pilgrim am I called to-day.

'A merchant am I of another town,
And rich enow to pay thee for thy deed,
If at the king's door thou wilt set me down;
For there a squire I know, who at my need
Will give me food and drink and fitting weed.
What is thy name? in what place dost thou live?
That I some day great gifts to thee may give.'

'Fair sir,' the carle said, 'I am poor enow,
Though certes food I lack not easily;
My name is Christopher a-Green; I sow
A little orchard set with bush and tree,

And ever there the kind land keepeth me,
For I, now fifty, from a little boy
Have dwelt thereon, and known both grief and joy.

'The house my grandsire built there has grown old,
And certainly a bounteous gift it were
If thou shouldst give me just enough of gold
To build it new; nor shouldst thou lack my prayer
For such a gift.' 'Nay, friend, have thou no care,'
The king said: 'this is but a little thing
To me, who oft am richer than the king.'

Now as they talked the gate was opened wide,
And toward the palace went they through the street,
And Christopher walked ever by the side
Of his rough wain, where midst the mayflowers sweet
Jovinian lay, that folk whom they might meet
Might see him not to mock at his bare skin:
So shortly to the king's door did they win.

Then through the open gate Jovinian ran
Of the first court, and no man stayed him there;
But as he reached the second gate, a man
Of the king's household, seeing him all bare
And bloody, cried out, 'Whither dost thou fare?
Sure thou art seventy times more mad than mad,
Or else some magic potion thou hast had,

'Whereby thou fear'st not steel or anything.'
'But,' said the king, 'good fellow, I know thee;
And can it be thou knowest not thy king?
Nay, thou shalt have a good reward of me,
That thou wouldst rather have than ten years' fee,
If thou wilt clothe me in fair weed again,
For now to see my council am I fain.'

'Out, ribald!' quoth the fellow, 'what say'st thou?
Thou art my lord, whom God reward and bless?
Truly before long shalt thou find out how
John Hangman cureth ill folk's wilfulness;
Yea, from his scourge the blood has run for less
Than that which now thou sayest: nay, what say I?
For lighter words have I seen tall men die.

'Come now, the sergeants to this thing shall see!'
So to the guardroom was Jovinian brought,
Where his own soldiers mocked him bitterly,
And all his desperate words they heeded naught;
Until at last there came to him this thought,
That never from this misery should he win,
But, spite of all his struggles, die therein.

And terrible it seemed, that everything
So utterly was changed since yesterday;
That these who were the soldiers of the king,
Ready to lie down in the common way
Before him, nor durst rest if he bade play,
Now stood and mocked him, knowing not the face
At whose command each man there had his place.

'Ah, God!' said he, 'is this another earth
From that whereon I stood two days ago?
Or else in sleep have I had second birth?
Or among mocking shadows do I go,
Unchanged myself of flesh and fell, although
My fair weed I have lost and royal gear?
And meanwhile all are changed that I meet here;

'And yet in heart and nowise outwardly.'
Amid his wretched thoughts two sergeants came,
Who said, 'Hold, sirs! because the king would see
The man who thus so rashly brings him shame,

By taking his high style and spotless name,
That never has been questioned ere to-day.
Come, fool! needs is it thou must go our way.'

So at the sight of him all men turned round,
As 'twixt these two across the courts he went,
With downcast head and hands together bound;
While from the windows maid and varlet leant,
And through the morning air fresh laughter sent;
Until unto the threshold they were come
Of the great hall within that kingly home.

Therewith right fast Jovinian's heart must beat,
As now he thought, 'Lo, here shall end the strife;
For either shall I sit on mine own seat,
Known unto all, soldier and lord and wife,
Or else is this the ending of my life,
And no man henceforth shall remember me,
And a vain name in records shall I be.'

Therewith he raised his head up, and beheld
One clad in gold set on his royal throne,
Gold-crowned, whose hand the ivory sceptre held;
And underneath him sat the queen alone,
Ringed round with standing lords, of whom not one
Did aught but utmost reverence unto him;
Then did Jovinian shake in every limb.

Yet midst amaze and rage to him it seemed
This man was nowise like him in the face;
But with a marvellous glory his head gleamed,
As though an angel sat in that high place,
Where erst he sat like all his royal race —
But their eyes met, and with a stern, calm brow
The shining one cried out, 'And where art thou?

'Where art thou, robber of my majesty?'
'Was I not king,' he said, 'but yesterday?
And though to-day folk give my place to thee,
I am Jovinian; yes, though none gainsay,
If on these very stones thou shouldst me slay,
And though no friend be left for me to moan,
I am Jovinian still, and king alone.'

Then said that other, 'O thou foolish man,
King was I yesterday, and long before,
Nor is my name aught but Jovinian,
Whom in this house the queen my mother bore
Unto my longing father, for right sore
Was I desired before I saw the light;
Thou, fool, art first to speak against my right.

'And surely well thou meritest to die;
Yet ere that I bid lead thee unto death,
Hearken to these my lords that stand anigh,
And what this faithful queen beside me saith,
Then mayst thou many a year hence draw thy breath,
If these should stammer in their speech one whit:
Behold this face, lords, look ye well on it!

'Thou, O fair queen, say now whose face is this!'
Then cried they, 'Hail, O Lord Jovinian!
Long mayst thou live!' and the queen knelt to kiss
His gold-shod feet, and through her face there ran
Sweet color, as she said, 'Thou art the man
By whose side I have lain for many a year;
Thou art my lord Jovinian, lief and dear.'

Then said he, 'O thou wretch, hear now and see!
What thing should hinder me to slay thee now?
And yet, indeed, such mercy is in me,
If thou wilt kneel down humbly and avow

Thou art no king, but base-born, as I know
Thou art indeed, in mine house shalt thou live,
And as thy service is, so shalt thou thrive.'

But the unhappy king laughed bitterly,
The red blood rose to flush his visage wan
Where erst the gray of death began to be:
'Thou liest!' he said. 'I am Jovinian,
Come of great kings; nor am I such a man
As still to live when all delight is gone,
As thou mightst do, who sittest on my throne.'

No answer made the other for a while,
But sat and gazed upon him steadfastly,
Until across his face there came a smile,
Where scorn seemed mingled with some great pity.
And then he said, 'Nathless thou shalt not die,
But live on as thou mayst, a lowly man,
Forgetting thou wast once Jovinian.'

Then wildly round the hall Jovinian gazed,
Turning about to many a well-known face;
But none of all his folk seemed grieved or mazed,
But stood unmoved, each in his wonted place:
There were the Lords, the Marshal with his mace,
The Chamberlain, the Captain of the Guard,
Gray-headed, with his wrinkled face and hard,

That had peered down so many a lane of war;
There stood the grave ambassadors arow,
Come from half-conquered lands; without the bar
The foreign merchants gazed upon the show,
Willing new things of that great land to know;
Nor was there any doubt in any man
That the gold throne still held Jovinian.

Yea, as the sergeants laid their hands on him,
The mighty hound that crouched before the throne,
Flew at him fain to tear him limb from limb,
Though in the woods the brown bear's dying groan
He and that beast had often heard alone.
'Ah!' muttered he, 'take thou thy wages too,
Worship the risen sun as these men do.'

They thrust him out; and as he passed the door,
The murmur of the stately court he heard
Behind him, and soft footfalls on the floor,
And though by this somewhat his skin was seared,
Hung back at the rough eager wind afeard;
But from the place they dragged him through the gate,
Wherethrough he oft had rid in royal state.

Then down the streets they led him, where of old
He, coming back from some well-finished war,
Had seen the line of flashing steel and gold
Wind upwards 'twixt the houses from the bar,
While clashed the bells from wreathed spires afar;
Now moaning, as they haled him on, he said,
'God and the world against one lonely head!'

V.

But soon, the bar being passed, they loosed their hold,
And said, 'Thus saith by us our lord the king,
Dwell now in peace, but yet be not so bold
To come again, or to thy lies to cling,
Lest unto thee there fall a worser thing;
And for ourselves we bid thee ever pray
For him who has been good to thee this day.'

Therewith they turned away into the town,
And still he wandered on and knew not where,
Till, stumbling at the last, he fell adown,
And looking round beheld a brook right fair,
That ran in pools and shallows here and there,
And on the further side of it a wood,
Nigh which a lowly clay-built hovel stood.

Gazing thereat, it came into his mind
A priest dwelt there, a hermit wise and old,
Whom he had ridden oftentimes to find,
In days when first the sceptre he did hold,
And unto whom his mind he oft had told,
And had good counsel from him, though indeed
A scanty crop had sprung from that good seed.

Therefore he passed the brook with heavy cheer,
And toward the little house went speedily,
And at the door knocked, trembling with his fear,
Because he thought, 'Will he remember me?
If not, within me must there surely be
Some devil who turns everything to ill,
And makes my wretched body do his will.'

So, while such doleful things as this he thought,
There came unto the door the holy man,
Who said, 'Good friend, what tidings hast thou brought?'
'Father,' he said, 'knowest thou Jovinian?
Know'st thou me not, made naked, poor, and wan?
Alas, O father, am I not the king,
The rightful lord of thee and everything?'

'Nay, thou art mad to tell me such a tale!'
The hermit said; 'if thou seek'st soul's health here,
Right little will such words as this avail;
It were a better deed to shrive thee clear,

And take the pardon Christ has bought so dear,
Than to an ancient man such mocks to say
That would be fitter for a Christmas play.'

So to his hut he got him back again;
And fell the unhappy king upon his knees,
And unto God at last he did complain,
Saying, 'Lord God, what bitter things are these?
What hast thou done, that every man that sees
This wretched body, of my death is fain?
O Lord God, give me back myself again,

'E'en if therewith I needs must die straightway!
Indeed I know that since upon the earth
I first did go, I ever day by day
Have grown the worse, who was of little worth
E'en at the best time since my helpless birth.
And yet it pleased thee once to make me king;
Why hast thou made me now this wretched thing?

'Why am I hated so of every one?
Wilt thou not let me live my life again,
Forgetting all the deeds that I have done,
Forgetting my old name, and honors vain,
That I may cast away this lonely pain?
Yet if thou wilt not, help me in this strife,
That I may pass my little span of life,

'Not made a monster by unhappiness.
What shall I say? Thou mad'st me weak of will,
Thou wrapped'st me in ease and carelessness,
And yet, as some folk say, thou lovest me still;
Look down, of folly I have had my fill,
And am but now as first thou madest me,
Weak, yielding clay to take impress of thee.'

So said he weeping, and but scarce had done,
When yet again came forth that hermit old,
And said, 'Alas! my master and my son,
Is this a dream my wearied eyes behold?
What doleful wonder now shall I be told
Of that ill world that I so long have left?
What thing thy glory from thee has bereft?'

A strange surprise of joy therewith there came
To that worn heart; he said, 'For some great sin
The Lord my God has brought me unto shame;
I am unknown of servants, wife, and kin,
Unknown of all the lords that stand within
My father's house; nor didst thou know me more
When e'en just now I stood before thy door.

'Now, since thou know'st me, surely God is good,
And will not slay me, and good hope I have
Of help from Him that died upon the rood,
And is a mighty lord to slay and save:
So now again these blind men will I brave,
If thou wilt give me of thy poorest weed,
And some rough food, the which I sorely need;

'Then of my sins thou straight shalt shrive me clean.'
Then, weeping, said the holy man, 'Dear lord,
What heap of woes upon thine head has been!
Enter, O king, take this rough gown and cord,
And scanty food, my hovel can afford;
And tell me everything thou hast to say,
And then the High God speed thee on thy way.'

So when in coarse serge raiment he was clad,
He told him all his pride had made him think,
And showed him of his life both good and bad;

And then, being houselled, did he eat and drink,
While in the wise man's heart his words did sink,
For, 'God be praised!' he thought, 'I am no king,
Who scarcely shall do right in anything!'

Then he made ready for the king his ass,
And bade again God speed him on the way;
And down the road the king made haste to pass
As it was growing toward the end of day,
With sober joy for troubles passed away,
But trembling still, as onward he did ride,
Meeting few folk upon that eventide.

VI.

So to the city gate being come at last,
He noted there two ancient warders stand,
Whereof one looked askance as he went past,
And whispered low behind his held-up hand
Unto his mate, 'The king, who gave command
That if disguised he passed this gate to-day,
No reverence we should do him on the way.'

Thereat with joy Jovinian smiled again,
And so passed onward quickly down the street;
And wellnigh was he eased of all his pain
When he beheld the folk that he might meet
Gaze hard at him, as though they fain would greet
His well-known face, but durst not, knowing well
He would not any of his state should tell.

Withal unto the palace being come,
He lighted down thereby and entered,

And once again it seemed his royal home,
For folk again before him bowed the head;
And to him came a squire, who softly said,
'The queen awaits thee, O my lord the king,
Within the little hall where minstrels sing,

'Since there thou badst her meet thee on this night.'
'Lead on then!' said the king; and in his heart
He said, 'Perfay all goeth more than right,
And I am king again;' but with a start
He thought of him who played the kingly part
That morn, yet said, 'If God will have it so,
This man like all the rest my face will know.'

So in the little hall the queen he found,
Asleep, as one a spell binds suddenly;
For her fair broidery lay upon the ground,
And in her lap her open hand did lie,
The silken-threaded needle close thereby;
And by her stood that image of the king
In rich apparel, crown, and signet ring.

But when the king stepped forth with angry eye
And would have spoken, came a sudden light,
And changed was that other utterly;
For he was clad in robe of shining white,
Inwrought with flowers of unnamed colors bright,
Girt with a marvellous girdle, and whose hem
Fell to his naked feet and shone in them;

And from his shoulders did two wings arise,
That with the swaying of his body played
This way and that; of strange and lovely dyes
Their feathers were, and wonderfully made:
And now he spoke, 'O king, be not dismayed,

Or think my coming here so strange to be,
For oft ere this have I been close to thee.

'And now thou knowest in how short a space
The God that made the world can unmake thee,
And though he alter in no whit thy face,
Can make all folk forget thee utterly,
That thou to-day a nameless wretch mayst be,
Who yesterday woke up without a peer,
The wide world's marvel and the people's fear.

'Behold, thou oughtest to thank God for this,
That on the hither side of thy dark grave
Thou well hast learned how great a God he is,
Who from the heavens countless rebels drave,
Yet turns himself such folk as thee to save;
For many a man thinks naught at all of it,
Till in a darksome land he comes to sit,

'Lamenting everything: so do not thou!
For inasmuch as thou thought'st not to die,
This thing may happen to thee even now,
Because the day unspeakable draws nigh,
When bathed in unknown flame all things shall lie;
And if thou art upon God's side that day,
Unslain, thine earthly part shall pass away.

'Or if thy body in the grave must rot,
Well mayst thou see how small a thing is this,
Whose pain of yesterday now hurts thee not,
Now thou hast come again to earthly bliss,
Though bitter-sweet thou knowest well this is,
And though no coming day can ever see
Ending of happiness where thou mayst be.

'Now must I go, nor wilt thou see me more
Until the day when, unto thee at least,
This world is gone, and an unmeasured shore,
Where all is wonderful and changed, thou seest:
Therefore, farewell! at council and at feast
Thy nobles shalt thou meet as thou hast done,
Nor wilt thou more be strange to any one.'

So scarce had he done speaking ere his wings
Within the doorway of the hall did gleam,
And then he vanished quite; and all these things
Unto Jovinian little more did seem
Than some distinct and well-remembered dream,
From which one wakes amidst a feverish night,
Taking the moonshine for the morning light.

Silent he stood, not moving for a while,
Pondering o'er all these wondrous things, until
The queen arose from sleep, and with a smile
Said, 'O fair lord, your great men by your will
E'en as I speak the banquet-chamber fill,
To greet thee amidst joy and revelling;
Wilt thou not therefore meet them as a king?'

So from that place of marvels having gone,
Half-mazed, he soon was clad in rich array,
And sat thereafter on his kingly throne,
As though no other had sat there that day;
Nor did a soul of all his household say
A word about the man who on that morn
Had stood there naked, helpless, and forlorn.

But ever, day by day, the thought of it
Within Jovinian's heart the clearer grew,
As o'er his head the ceaseless time did flit,

And everything still towards its ending drew,
New things becoming old, and old things new;
Till, when a moment of eternity
Had passed, gray-headed did Jovinian lie

One sweet May morning, wakeful in his bed,
And thought, 'That day is thirty years agone
Since useless folly came into my head,
Whereby, before the steps of mine own throne,
I stood in helpless agony alone,
And of the wondrous things that there befell,
When I am gone there will be none to tell.

'No man is now alive who thinks that he
Who bade thrust out the madman on that tide
Was other than the king they used to see:
Long years have passed now since the hermit died;
So must I tell the tale, ere by his side
I lie, lest it be unrecorded quite,
Like a forgotten dream in morning light.

'Yea, lest I die ere night come, this same day
Unto some scribe will I tell everything,
That it may lie, when I am gone away,
Stored up within the archives of the king;
And may God grant the words thereof may ring
Like His own voice in the next comer's ears,
Whereby his folk shall shed the fewer tears!'

So it was done, and at the king's command
A clerk that day did note it every whit,
And after by a man of skilful hand
In golden letters fairly was it writ;
Yet little heed the new king took of it

That filled the throne when King Jovinian died,
So much did all things feed his swelling pride.

But whether God chastised him in his turn,
And he grew wise thereafter, I know not;
I think by eld alone he came to learn
How lowly on some day must be his lot.
But ye, O kings, think all that ye have got
To be but gauds cast out upon some heap,
And stolen the while the Master was asleep.

INTERLUDE.

The story done, for want of happier things,
Some men must even fall to talk of kings;
Some trouble of a far-off Grecian isle,
Some hard Sicilian craftsman's cruel guile
Whereby he raised himself to be as God,
Till good men slew him; the fell Persian rod
As blighting as the deadly pestilence,
The brazen net of armed men from whence
Was no escape; the fir-built Norway hall
Filled with the bonders waiting for the fall
Of the great roof whereto the torch is set;
The laughing mouth, beneath the eyes still wet
With more than sea-spray, as the well-loved land
The freeman still looks back on, while his hand
Clutches the tiller, and the eastern breeze
Grows fresh and fresher: many things like these
They talked about, till they seemed young again,
Remembering what a glory and a gain
Their fathers deemed the death of kings to be.

And yet amidst it some smiled doubtfully
For thinking how few men escape the yoke
From this or that man's hand, and how most folk
Must needs be kings and slaves the while they live,
And take from this man, and to that man give
Things hard enow. Yet as they mused, again
The minstrels raised some high heroic strain
That led men on to battle in old times;
And midst the glory of its mingling rhymes,
Their hard hearts softened, and strange thoughts arose
Of some new end to all life's cruel foes.

MAY.

O Love, this morn, when the sweet nightingale
Had so long finished all he had to say
That thou hadst slept, and sleep had told his tale,
And midst a peaceful dream had stolen away
In fragrant dawning of the first of May,
Didst thou see aught? didst thou hear voices sing,
Ere to the risen sun the bells 'gan ring?

For then methought the Lord of Love went by
To take possession of his flowery throne,
Ringed round with maids and youths and minstrelsy;
A little while I sighed to find him gone,
A little while the dawning was alone,
And the light gathered; then I held my breath,
And shuddered at the sight of Eld and Death.

Alas! Love passed me in the twilight dun,
His music hushed the wakening ousel's song;
But on these twain shone out the golden sun,
And o'er their heads the brown birds' tune was strong,
As, shivering, 'twixt the trees they stole along:
None noted aught their noiseless passing by;
The world had quite forgotten it must die.

PRELUDE TO THE WRITING ON THE IMAGE.

THROUGH many changes had the May-tide passed,
The hope of summer oft had been o'ercast,
Ere midst the gardens they once more were met;
But now the full-leaved trees might well forget
The changeful agony of doubtful spring,
For summer pregnant with so many a thing
Was at the door; right hot had been the day
Which they amid the trees had passed away,
And now betwixt the tulip-beds they went
Unto the hall, and thoughts of days long spent
Gathered about them, as some blossom's smell
Unto their hearts familiar tales did tell.

But when they well were settled in the hall,
And now behind the trees the sun 'gan fall,
And they as yet no history had heard,
Laurence, the Swabian priest, took up the word,
And said, 'Ye know from what has gone before,
That in my youth I followed mystic lore,
And many books I read in seeking it;
And through my memory this same eve doth flit
A certain tale I found in one of these,
Long ere mine eyes had looked upon the seas.
It made me shudder in the times gone by,
When I believed in many a mystery
I thought divine, that now I think, forsooth,
Men's own fears made, to fill the place of truth
Within their foolish hearts. Short is the tale,
And therefore will the better now avail
To fill the space before the night comes on,
And unto rest once more the world is won.

THE WRITING ON THE IMAGE.

ARGUMENT.

How on an Image that stood anciently in Rome were written certain words, which none understood, until a scholar, coming there, knew their meaning, and thereby discovered great marvels, but withal died miserably.

In half-forgotten days of old,
As by our fathers we were told,
Within the town of Rome there stood
An image cut of cornel-wood,
And on the upraised hand of it
Men might behold these letters writ —
'PERCUTE HIC:' which is to say,
In that tongue that we speak to-day,
'*Strike here!*' nor yet did any know
The cause why this was written so.

Thus in the middle of the square,
In the hot sun and summer air,
The snow-drift and the driving rain,
That image stood, with little pain,
For twice a hundred years and ten;
While many a band of striving men
Were driven betwixt woe and mirth
Swiftly across the weary earth,
From nothing unto dark nothing:
And many an emperor and king,
Passing with glory or with shame,
Left little record of his name,
And no remembrance of the face
Once watched with awe for gifts or grace.

Fear little, then, I counsel you,
What any son of man can do;

Because a log of wood will last
While many a life of man goes past,
And all is over in short space.

Now so it chanced that to this place
There came a man of Sicily,
Who, when the image he did see,
Knew full well who, in days of yore,
Had set it there; for much strange lore,
In Egypt and in Babylon,
This man with painful toil had won,
And many secret things could do:
So verily full well he knew
That master of all sorcery
Who wrought the thing in days gone by,
And doubted not that some great spell
It guarded, but could nowise tell
What it might be. So, day by day,
Still would he loiter on the way,
And watch the image carefully,
Well mocked of many a passer-by.

And on a day he stood and gazed
Upon the slender finger, raised
Against a doubtful cloudy sky,
Nigh noontide; and thought, 'Certainly
The master who made thee so fair
By wondrous art, had not stopped there,
But made thee speak, had he not thought
That thereby evil might be brought
Upon his spell.' But as he spoke,
From out a cloud the noon sun broke
With watery light, and shadows cold:
Then did the Scholar well behold
How, from that finger carved to tell

Those words, a short black shadow fell
Upon a certain spot of ground,
And thereon, looking all around
And seeing none heeding, went straightway
Whereas the finger's shadow lay,
And with his knife about the place
A little circle did he trace;
Then home he turned with throbbing head,
And forthright gat him to his bed,
And slept until the night was late
And few men stirred from gate to gate.
So when at midnight he did wake,
Pickaxe and shovel did he take,
And, going to that now silent square,
He found the mark his knife made there,
And quietly with many a stroke
The pavement of the place he broke:
And so, the stones being set apart,
He 'gan to dig with beating heart,
And from the hole in haste he cast
The marl and gravel; till at last,
Full shoulder high, his arms were jarred,
For suddenly his spade struck hard
With clang against some metal thing:
And soon he found a brazen ring,
All green with rust, twisted, and great
As a man's wrist, set in a plate
Of copper, wrought all curiously
With words unknown though plain to see
Spite of the rust; and flowering trees,
And beasts, and wicked images,
Whereat he shuddered; for he knew
What ill things he might come to do,
If he should still take part with these
And that great master strive to please.

But small time had he then to stand
And think, so straight he set his hand
Unto the ring; but where he thought
That by main strength it must be brought
From out its place, lo! easily
It came away, and let him see
A winding staircase wrought of stone,
Wherethrough the new-come wind did moan.
Then thought he, 'If I come alive
From out this place, well shall I thrive,
For I may look here certainly
The treasures of a king to see,
A mightier man than men are now.
So in few days what man shall know
The needy Scholar, seeing me
Great in the place where great men be,
The richest man in all the land?
Beside the best then shall I stand,
And some unheard-of palace have;
And if my soul I may not save
In heaven, yet here in all men's eyes
Will I make some sweet paradise,
With marble cloisters, and with trees
And bubbling wells, and fantasies,
And things all men deem strange and rare,
And crowds of women kind and fair,
That I may see, if so I please,
Laid on the flowers, or mid the trees
With half-clad bodies wandering.
There, dwelling happier than the king,
What lovely days may yet be mine!
How shall I live with love and wine
And music, till I come to die!
And then — who knoweth certainly
What haps to us when we are dead?

Truly I think by likelihead
Naught haps to us of good or bad;
Therefore on earth will I be glad
A short space, free from hope or fear;
And fearless will I enter here
And meet my fate, whatso it be.'

Now on his back a bag had he,
To bear what treasure he might win,
And therewith now did he begin
To go adown the winding stair;
And found the walls all painted fair
With images of many a thing,
Warrior and priest, and queen and king,
But nothing knew what they might be.
Which things full clearly could he see,
For lamps were hung up here and there
Of strange device, but wrought right fair,
And pleasant savor came from them.
At last a curtain, on whose hem
Unknown words in red gold were writ,
He reached, and softly raising it
Stepped back, for now did he behold
A goodly hall hung round with gold,
And at the upper end could see
Sitting a glorious company:
Therefore he trembled, thinking well
They were no men, but fiends of hell.
But while he waited, trembling sore,
And doubtful of his late-learned lore,
A cold blast of the outer air
Blew out the lamps upon the stair,
And all was dark behind him; then
Did he fear less to face those men
Than, turning round, to leave them there

While he went groping up the stair.
Yea, since he heard no cry or call
Or any speech from them at all,
He doubted they were images
Set there some dying king to please
By that great master of the art;
Therefore at last with stouter heart
He raised the cloth and entered in
In hope that happy life to win,
And drawing nigher did behold
That these were bodies dead and cold,
Attired in full royal guise,
And wrought by art in such a wise
That living they all seemed to be,
Whose very eyes he well could see,
That now beheld not foul or fair,
Shining as though alive they were.
And midmost of that company
An ancient king that man could see,
A mighty man, whose beard of gray
A foot over his gold gown lay;
And next beside him sat his queen,
Who in a flowery gown of green
And golden mantle well was clad,
And on her neck a collar had
Too heavy for her dainty breast;
Her loins by such a belt were pressed
That whoso in his treasury
Held that alone a king might be.
On either side of these, a lord
Stood heedfully before the board,
And in their hands held bread and wine
For service; behind these did shine
The armor of the guards, and then
The well-attired serving-men,

The minstrels clad in raiment meet;
And over against the royal seat
Was hung a lamp, although no flame
Was burning there, but there was set
Within its open golden fret
A huge carbuncle, red and bright;
Wherefrom there shone forth such a light
That great hall was as clear by it,
As though by wax it had been lit,
As some great church at Easter-tide.
Now set a little way aside,
Six paces from the daïs stood
An image made of brass and wood,
In likeness of a full-armed knight
Who pointed 'gainst the ruddy light
A huge shaft ready in a bow.
Pondering how he could come to know
What all these marvellous matters meant,
About the hall the Scholar went,
Trembling, though nothing moved as yet;
And for a while did he forget
The longings that had brought him there
In wondering at these marvels fair;
And still for fear he doubted much
One jewel of their robes to touch.

But as about the hall he passed
He grew more used to them at last,
And thought, 'Swiftly the time goes by,
And now no doubt the day draws nigh
Folk will be stirring; by my head
A fool I am to fear the dead,
Who have seen living things enow,
Whose very names no man can know,
Whose shapes brave men might well affright

More than the lion in the night
Wandering for food;' therewith he drew
Unto those royal corpses two,
That on dead brows still wore the crown;
And midst the golden cups set down
The rugged wallet from his back,
Patched of strong leather, brown and black.
Then, opening wide its mouth, took up
From off the board a golden cup
The king's dead hand was laid upon,
Whose unmoved eyes upon him shone
And recked no more of that last shame
Than if he were the beggar lame,
Who in old days was wont to wait
For a dog's meal beside the gate.
Of which shame naught our man did reck,
But laid his hand upon the neck
Of the slim queen, and thence undid
The jewelled collar, that straight slid
Down her smooth bosom to the board.
And when these matters he had stored
Safe in his sack, with both their crowns,
The jewelled parts of their rich gowns,
Their shoes and belts, brooches and rings,
And cleared the board of all rich things,
He staggered with them down the hall.
But as he went his eyes did fall
Upon a wonderful green stone,
Upon the hall floor laid alone.
He said, 'Though thou art not so great
To add by much unto the weight
Of this my sack indeed, yet thou,
Certes, would make me rich enow,
That verily with thee I might
Wage one half of the world to fight

The other half of it, and I
The lord of all the world might die;
I will not leave thee:' therewithal
He knelt down midmost of the hall,
Thinking it would come easily
Into his hand; but when that he
Gat hold of it, full fast it stack.
So, fuming, down he laid his sack,
And with both hands pulled lustily.
But as he strained, he cast his eye
Unto the daïs, and saw there
The image who the great bow bare
Moving the bowstring to his ear;
So, shrieking out aloud for fear,
Of that rich stone he loosed his hold
And, catching up his bag of gold,
Gat to his feet: but ere he stood,
The evil thing of brass and wood
Up to his ear the notches drew;
And clanging forth the arrow flew,
And midmost of the carbuncle
Clanging again, the forked barbs fell,
And all was dark as pitch straightway.

So there until the judgment day
Shall come and find his bones laid low,
And raise them up for weal or woe,
This man must bide; cast down he lay,
While all his past life day by day
In one short moment he could see
Drawn out before him, while that he
In terror by that fatal stone
Was laid, and scarcely dared to moan.
But in a while his hope returned,
And then, though nothing he discerned,

He gat him up upon his feet,
And all about the walls he beat
To find some token of the door,
But never could he find it more,
For by some dreadful sorcery
All was sealed close as it might be,
And midst the marvels of that hall
This Scholar found the end of all.

But in the town on that same night,
An hour before the dawn of light,
Such storm upon the place there fell,
That not the oldest man could teli
Of such another; and thereby
The image was burnt utterly,
Being stricken from the clouds above;
And folk deemed that same bolt did move
The pavement where that wretched one
Unto his foredoomed fate had gone,
Because the plate was set again
Into its place, and the great rain
Washed the earth down, and sorcery
Had hid the place where it did lie.
So soon the stones were set all straight;
But yet the folk, afraid of fate,
Where once the man of cornel-wood
Through many a year of bad and good
Had kept his place, set up alone
Great Jove himself, cut in white stone,
But thickly overlaid with gold.
'Which,' saith my tale, 'you may behold
Unto this day, although indeed
Some lord or other, being in need,
Took every ounce of gold away.'

But now, this tale in some past day
Being writ, I warrant all is gone,
Both gold and weather-beaten stone.

Be merry, masters, while ye may,
For men much quicker pass away.

INTERLUDE.

They praised the tale, and for a while they talked
Of other tales of treasure-seekers balked,
And shame and loss for men insatiate stored,
Nitocris' tomb, the Niflungs' fatal hoard,
The serpent-guarded treasures of the dead;
Then of how men would be remembered
When they are gone; and more than one could tell
Of what unhappy things therefrom befell;
Or how by folly men have gained a name, —
A name, indeed, not hallowed by the fame
Of any deeds remembered; and some thought,
'Strange hopes and fears for what shall be but naught
To dead men! better it would be to give
What things they may, while on the earth they live,
Unto the earth, and from the bounteous earth
To take their pay of sorrow or of mirth,
Hatred or love, and get them on their way;
And let the teeming earth fresh troubles make
For other men, and ever for their sake
Use what they left, when they are gone from it.'

But while amid such musings they did sit,
Dark night being come, men lighted up the hall,
And the chief man for minstrelsy did call,
And other talk their dull thoughts chased away,
Nor did they part till night was mixed with day.

NOTES.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES.

Cf. (*confer*), compare.
F. Q., Spenser's *Faërie Queene.*
Id. (*idem*), the same.
Imp. Dict., Ogilvie's *Imperial Dictionary* (Century Co.'s ed., New York, 1883).
Wb., Webster's Dictionary (quarto ed.).
Jason, Morris's *The Life and Death of Jason.*
Sigurd, Morris's *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs.*
Skelton, Mr. John Skelton's *William Morris and Matthew Arnold*, in Fraser's Magazine, February, 1869.

The abbreviations of the name of Shakespeare's plays will be readily understood. The line-numbers are those of the "Globe" edition.

NOTES.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE.

THE plan of *The Earthly Paradise*, as briefly stated in the prelude to *Atalanta's Race*, consists in the relation at fortnightly feasts of certain mediæval and classical tales told alternately by the Wanderers and by men of "the seed of the Ionian race," whose guests they have become, as the *Prologue* recounts. Twenty-four tales are therefore told in the course of the year; and each tale is preluded by a few lines of description, which serve to place the mind of the listener in as perfect accord with the story following as the low notes of an organ voluntary the heart of the worshipper with the accompanying service. An interlude of the same general character follows each tale, and the advent of each month is noted by a poem of three seven-lined stanzas. It is from the first, or Spring, volume of *The Earthly Paradise* that our selections are taken. The contents of this first volume, including the *Prologue*, the interludes, preludes, and month poems before mentioned, are: —

Atalanta's Race.
The Man Born to be King.
The Doom of King Acrisius.
The Proud King.
The Story of Cupid and Psyche.
The Writing on the Image.

The volume devoted to the Summer months contains: —

The Love of Alcestis.
The Lady of the Land.
The Son of Crœsus.
The Watching of the Falcon.
Pygmalion and the Image.
Ogier the Dane.

In the Autumn volume are the following tales: —

The Death of Paris.
The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon.
The Story of Acontius and Cydippe.
The Man who never Laughed Again.
The Story of Rhodope.
The Lovers of Gudrun.

The remaining, or Winter, volume contains: —

The Golden Apples.
The Fostering of Aslaug.
Bellerophon at Argos.
The Ring Given to Venus.
Bellerophon in Lycia.
The Hill of Venus.

In the prefatory stanzas Morris states his poetic mission. He informs us that we must not look in his pages for speculation or reflection upon the problems nearest modern life: his part is only that of the teller of tales. His purpose is merely to add to the amount of human

enjoyment by relating once more the old-world tales which give pleasure even though they cannot ease pain.

1. *Of Heaven or Hell*, etc. That is, I am no Virgil, Dante, nor Milton to tell of the joys of the one or the pains of the other. I have no power to deal with such great themes.

3. *Or make quick-coming death*, etc. Says a writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette*: "*The Earthly Paradise* is written from the standpoint of a paganism that is frankly afraid of death, and eager to make the most of life and its blessings, foremost among which it reckons the artistic gratification of the senses."

7. *Idle.* Easeful, as in 14 and 17 below.

12. *Made the more mindful*, etc. "Above all," writes the critic Sidney Colvin, of *The Earthly Paradise*, "there is one never-forgotten keynote; there are the conscious love of life for living's sake, and the realized detestation of death because it puts an end to life, which at all moments of imagined festivity or delight recur with wistfulness to deplore that such things must pass away, and to desire for them immortality in the midst of denying it."

22. *Born out of my due time.* The meaning of this evidently is that the dreamer of dreams — the romantic poet, in other words — is out of place in this modern world, with its pressing actualities; he has come into the world too late. It has, however, been remarked that facts have not justified the poet's description of himself, because the rapid growth of his popularity has proved that his coming was most decidedly opportune.

23. *Why should I strive?* etc. Cf. Tennyson, *Maud:*

> "Shall I weep if a Poland fall? shall I shriek if a Hungary fail?
> Or an infant civilization be ruled with rod or with knout?
> I have not made the world, and He that made it will guide."

25. *The ivory gate.* Brewer's *Reader's Handbook* says: "Dreams which delude pass through the ivory gate, but those which come true through the horn gate. This whim depends upon two puns: Ivory, in Greek, is *elĕphas*, and the verb *elephairō* means 'to cheat;' horn, in Greek, is *keras*, and the verb *karanŏo* means 'to accomplish.'" Cf. Virgil, *Æn.* vi. 894:

> "Sunt geminae somni portae, quarum altera fertur
> Cornea, qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris;
> Altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto,
> Sed falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia Manes."

See also Lowell, *Death of a Friend's Child:*

> "Life is the jailer, Death the angel sent
> To draw the unwilling bolts and set us free.
> He flings not ope the ivory gate of Rest, —
> Only the fallen spirit knocks at that."

29–35. *A wizard . . . day.* With regard to this passage Mr. Morris writes us as follows: "Many years ago I read in some Elizabethan book, I fancy *Dr. Faustus*, the story of the wizard, which, I remember, finished quaintly enough in this manner: that he gave the king and each of his lords a bunch of grapes and a knife, but bade them not to cut

till he said the word, and of a sudden each man found that he was holding his own nose! I had no book before me when I wrote the lines in question. I may tell you that the other day, in reading the translation of the Turkish *Forty Viziers*, I came across a passage where a wizard shows a king various scenes strange or terrifying out of the various windows of a pavilion; so that the incident is probably one of the regular traditional ones."

33. *Arow.* In order. Morris is very fond of compounds with *a-*.[1] *Arow* is one of the less frequent compounds of this kind, but is found occasionally in the verse of other contemporary poets. For instance, in a short poem in Scollard's *Pictures in Song* the word occurs:

> "And for your pinky blooms arow
> Accept this tiny flower of rhyme."

39. *Steely.* A particularly happy use of this Shakespearian adjective.

41. *Men* is the subject of the verb in this line. The thought is simply a continuation of that in 22, 23; namely, that the task of overcoming the difficulties of this restless modern life belongs to stronger men, not to this singer of songs.

The seven-lined decasyllabic stanza in which this preface is written is sometimes called the "Chaucerian Heptastich or Rhyme Royal." It is a favorite form with Morris, who has not only used it for the *Apology*, but has written in this form *Atalanta's Race*, *The Proud King*, *The Son of Crœsus*, *Pygmalion and the Image*, *The Death of Paris*, *The Man who never Laughed Again*, *The Story of Rhodope*, *The Golden Apples*, *The Hill of Venus*, and the *Epilogue*.

PROLOGUE.—THE WANDERERS.

In respect to altering a poem which has once appeared in type Morris differs greatly from Tennyson. He is a severe critic of his own work, however, and writes and rewrites till he is satisfied. Much of *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung* was thrown aside after the first writing and written over; and the *Prologue*, as we know it, is the second version of the narrative, the first having been destroyed by the poet. In the opening lines Morris presents a very striking contrast between the modern London and that of Chaucer's time, at which period he proposes to fix the date of the events of the *Prologue*.

1–6. *Forget . . . green.* "That welcome bidding," says one writer, "has been obeyed. As he sings we see, not dimly, but ever, it would seem, more and more vividly, as though, at each new turning of the leaf, a film of mist were scattering from a mirror more wonderful than that of old Cornelius Agrippa, the necromancer."

[1] At the opening of *Love is Enough* is one of many instances of his use of this word:

> "Look long, Joan, while I hold you so,
> For the silver trumpets come arow."

Cf. also *The Tune of Seven Towers*, 3: "From the desolate battlements all arow;" and also 27 in the same poem.

Six counties. The nearly seven hundred square miles now covered by London comprises portions of the counties of Surrey, Kent, Sussex, Middlesex, and Essex, the Metropolitan Police District even extending into Hampshire.

5. *London, small*, etc. Mr. William J. Loftie, in his *History of London*, vol. i. p. 227, says of the London which Chaucer knew: "The aspect of old London in the later years of Edward III., in fact, from what we know, was very fine. No doubt, as in the case of so many modern cities on the Continent and in the East, the best view was from the outside, where the narrow winding lanes, the broken pavement, the filth and ruin were not apparent, and where the spectator was astonished by the vast mass of buildings, great and small, which covered the double hill, a few standing out by themselves on account either of their beauty or their size. The long, red-tiled roofs of the companies' halls were contrasted with the shingled or lead-covered spires of the churches which rose between, while here and there a grim bastion of the city wall, or one of the gates, crowned by vanes and banners alternating with the heads of Scottish marauders, showed high and square." An excellent map of London in the thirteenth century may be found in Mr. Loftie's *History of London*, vol. i. p. 120.

7. *Below bridge.* The London Bridge of Chaucer's time was built in 1300, and was destroyed by fire in 1471. Cf. *Jason*, xvii. 14, 15 quoted below.

8. *Levantine staves. The Levant* was a term used to denote that portion of the Mediterranean which washes the shores of Asia Minor and Syria. *Levantine staves* were therefore staves brought from some province bordering on the Levant.

9. *Yew wood*, etc. The wood of the yew-tree has always been in demand for purposes where great strength is required. It is much used for axletrees, and before the days of firearms was greatly prized for making bows. Cf. Spenser, *F. Q.* i. 1. 9: "The Eugh, obedient to the benders will."

The burnt-up hill. Probably the hill-slopes scorched by the fierce heat of the summer sun.

10. *Pointed jars.* Amphoræ. These were two-handled jars, tapering at the bottom, and were used by the ancients and mediæval Greeks for holding wine and oil.

12. *Florence gold*, etc. The custom of weaving and embroidering with gold and silver is probably of East Indian origin. In mediæval times several European cities, Florence among the number, became centres of the manufacture of cloth woven with gold and silver.

Ypres napery. Ypres is a city of Belgium on the Yperte thirty miles southwest of Bruges. Its population is now about 17,000, but in the fourteenth century its inhabitants numbered 200,000, and the manufacture of woollen and linen (*diapre d'Ypres*) employed thousands of looms.

13. *Cloth of Bruges*, etc. Bruges, now the capital of the Belgian province of West Flanders, is eight miles distant from the North Sea, with which it is connected by canals, and fifty-five miles northwest of Brussels. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Bruges was one

of the great commercial centres of the world, and excelled in the number and excellence of its manufactures. By *Cloth of Bruges* the poet probably refers to the tapestry for which Bruges was once famous.

Hogsheads of Guienne. Hogsheads containing Bordeaux wine, Bordeaux being the capital of the English province of Guienne. The province was lost to England in 1451, when it was conquered by Charles VII. See on 226 below.

14, 15. *Nigh . . . lading.* "In June, 1374, Chaucer was appointed Comptroller of the Customs and Subsidy of wools, skins, and tanned hides in the port of London. This patent (doubtless according to the usual official form) required him to write the rolls of his office with his own hand, to be continually present there, and to perform his duties in person and not by deputy" (A. W. Ward's *Life of Chaucer*). The homage Morris pays to Chaucer in his verse is very sincere and genuine. In *Jason*, xvii. 5–24, occurs the following passage:

> "Would that I
> Had but some portion of that mastery
> That from the rose-hung lanes of woody Kent
> Through these five hundred years such songs have sent
> To us, who, meshed within this smoky net
> Of unrejoicing labor, love them yet.
> And thou, O Master! — yea, my Master still,
> Whatever feet have scaled Parnassus' hill,
> Since like thy measures, clear, and sweet, and strong,
> Thames' stream scarce fettered bore the bream along
> Unto the bastioned bridge, his only chain. —
> O Master, pardon me, if yet in vain
> Thou art my Master, and I fail to bring
> Before men's eyes the image of the thing
> My heart is filled with: thou whose dreamy eyes
> Beheld the flush to Cressid's cheeks arise,
> When Troilus rode up the praising street,
> As clearly as they saw thy townsmen meet
> Those who in vineyards of Poictou withstood
> The glittering horror of the steel-topped wood."

18. *Faërie.* The enchanted land, or region of illusions.

48. *Carven.* Morris nearly always uses this adjective in preference to *carved*. Cf. 2397 below. See also *Jason*, viii. 448, "The ram all carven was," and many other instances scattered throughout Morris's verse.

51. *A little band.* The scene here described is a very impressive one. The little group of weary and disappointed voyagers is surrounded by a wondering circle of soldiers and peasants overlooked by the pitying magistrates on their gilded chairs; and the contrast between the calm old age of the city elders and the bent forms of the Wanderers, upon whom old age has prematurely descended, heightens the effect.

59. *City graybeards.* The city rulers, as in 46.

72. *Grief once told,* etc. Cf. the words of King Eystein to Ivar Ingemundsson in the *Saga of Sigurd the Crusader*, "It sometimes happens that sorrow is lightened by being brought out openly," a passage which Morris may have had in mind.

75. *Our peasants say.* The peasants who brought the news to the city of the arrival of the Wanderers have evidently represented them

as barbarians because of the unfamiliar language spoken by the newcomers. The elder of the city, however, perceives the strangers to be by no means what the peasants report, and observes that Greek is not unknown to some of them.

86. *The shifting plain.* The sea. Cf. *Jason*, ii. 732:

> "Hast thou crossed o'er the green and restless plain
> Unharvested of any?"

In *Jason*, xii. 52, he uses the same adjective *shifting:*

> "Once more to try the green and shifting plain."

87. *Whereso.* This obsolete form of the adverb *wheresoever* Morris makes use of in several passages.

92, 93. *Content to sail*, etc. The restless spirit of Ulysses has not been inherited by these mediæval Greeks, "seed of the Ionian race," long severed from the land of their fathers.

103. *The twibil.* A sort of double-edged weapon not unlike a pick-axe in shape, used by infantry in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when repelling a cavalry attack. The word occurs again in *Sigurd:*

> "And he bore a mighty twibill as he waded the fight-sheaves through."

104. *Get.* Beget.

107. *Nathless.* (A. S. *natheles; na, the,* and *less,* not the less) nevertheless.

109. *The Vaeringers.* "Swedish and other Northern warriors, who were named by the Russians and Greeks 'Vaeringi' ('aliens with civic rights,' as contrasted with the emigrant Russi), took service sometimes with the Russian princes in their campaigns against the Emperors in Byzantium, sometimes as 'House-carls' or body-guards with the Byzantine Emperors themselves" (Worsaae's *Pre-History of the North*).

112, 113. *Swithiod the Greater.* "Svithjod the Great, or the Cold, is the ancient Sarmatia and Scythia Magna, and formed the great part of the present European Russia. In the mythological sagas it is also called Godheim; that is, the home of Odin and the other gods. Svithjod the Less is Sweden proper, and is called Mannheim; that is, the home of the kings, the descendants of the gods" (Anderson's notes to *The Younger Edda*, p. 225). "Svithjod is derived from one of the names of Odin, Svidr and thjod = folk, people. Svithjod thus means Odin's people, and the country takes its name from the people" (*Ibid.*, p. 236).

113. *House of gold.* The mansion of Odin, the ruling Scandinavian deity at Asgard. See on 122 below.

116. *Micklegarth.* Constantinople. *Gardr*, from which come our English words *yard* and *garth*, through the Anglo-Saxon *geard*, is a word of much import in the Norse tongues. "Gardor, Garda-ríki, or Garda-veldi, the empire of Gardar, is the old Scandinavian name of the Scandinavian Russian kingdom of the tenth and eleventh centuries, parts of which were Hólm-gardar, Kaenu-gardar, Novgorod, etc., the name being derived from the *castles* or *strongholds* (*gardar*) which the Scandinavians erected among the Sclavonic people; and the word tells the same tale as the Roman 'castle' in England. The modern

Russian *gorod* and *grad* are the remains of the old Scandinavian *gardr* = a castle. *Mikli-gardr* = the '*Muckle-yard*,' the Great town; i. e. Constantinople" (Vigfusson's *Icelandic-English Dict.*).

122. *Asagard.* (From *as*, god, and *gard*, home or hall.) The home of Odin, the principal god of Norse mythology, and of the twelve Aesir: Thor, Baldur, Freyr, Tyr, Bragi, Hodr, Heimdalr, Vidor, Vali, Ullr, Ve, and Forseti. The largest of the mansions at Asgard, or Asagard, as Morris spells it, was Gladsheim, the home of the gods. The dwelling of the goddesses was known as Vingolf. When the Aesir created men and placed them in Midgard, they connected it with Asgard by the bridge Bifröst, the rainbow which also conducts to the sacred fountain of Urd, where under the shade of the ash Yggdrasil the gods of Asgard take council together.

125. *Lazarus' finger.* Cf. Luke, xvi. 24.

128. *The gray-roofed seaport.* Drontheim, or, more properly, Trondhjem. Cf. prelude to *The Proud King*, 7. Trondhjem is the capital of the bailiwick of South Trondhjem, and has a population of about 20,000. Among the objects of interest which it contains are the cathedral, parts of which date from 1033; the palace of the old Norwegian kings, now an arsenal; and a museum.

130. *Dromond.* The name of a large class of merchant vessels in the Mediterranean in the middle ages. A dromond, or dromand, seems to have been a three-masted ship. The origin of the word is Greek, and refers to the swiftness of the ship or its long course, — *dromos.*

131, 132. *Or . . . gray.* "One of a series of landscape sketches which in their style have never been surpassed" (Skelton).

137. *Unholpen.* Unhelped, *holp* being the older imperfect tense and past participle of *help.* "Whatever mannerisms there are in the poetic works of William Morris," says one of his admirers, "to ourselves, at least, they come most acceptably. His genius is so essentially akin to that of the Father of English poetry, — insomuch that we are fain to regard him as Geoffrey Chaucer's lineal descendant, — and the antique diction so abundantly introduced in his descriptions seems to be his by right, and to flow from his pen quite naturally. *Natheless, gat, drave, anear, unholpen,* — words like these, obsolete as they may be in themselves, breathed from his lips, fall upon our senses with tones of welcome familiarity."

145–148. *An English knight . . . sin.* Referring to this point Mr. Morris writes us: "I meant Sir John Mandeville, but I have not his book by me, so I cannot be sure if he really does say that he did as my lines tell: I think he does. You may remember he spins a long yarn about the sham Earthly Paradise of the sheikh of Alamont."

150. *Entered.* Metrically a trisyllable.

153. *Swabian.* Swabia, or Suabia, was a duchy of the earlier German Empire. It was originally called Alemannia, and received the name of Swabia from the Suevi, who occupied a part of the territory when Clovis subdued the Alemanni in 496. Its ancient boundaries corresponded to the present kingdom of Würtemberg, the southern part of Baden, and the Bavarian districts of Swabia and Neuberg.

155. *The stone still sought.* The philosopher's stone was supposed to

be a substance which would convert all baser metals into gold. Those who searched for it expected to find it in the form of a red powder or amalgam, which when thrown into the crucible with base metals would drive off the impurities, leaving only the gold. It was while engaged in this vain search that the composition of gunpowder was discovered by Roger Bacon.

157. *The precious draught.* The *elixir vitae*, a fabled drug supposed to insure to those who drank it perpetual life and health. Tithonus, who once implored the gods to grant him the gift of endless life, forgot to ask for unending youth or happiness, and became

"Immortal age beside immortal youth."

159–162. *Kaiser Redbeard . . . come again.* Frederick I. (1123–1190) of Germany, called Barbarossa by the Italians on account of his red beard. His father was the Duke of Swabia, and his mother the daughter of the Duke of Bavaria. He was crowned Emperor of Germany in 1152, and of Rome in 1155. After a long and stormy career he engaged in a war with Saladin in Asia Minor, and was drowned, according to some accounts, while crossing a small river in Syria immediately after a battle in which he had been victor. According to the legend connected with him, the great emperor instead of dying withdrew into the Kyffhaüser Mountain, where he still sits asleep in a crystal cave before a marble table of wonderful whiteness. Around him are his sleeping knights with their horses saddled. Once in every hundred years the emperor awakes, and asks the dwarf page at his side if the ravens yet fly about the mountain. When the dwarf returns with the information that they do, the company fall asleep for another century. Whenever the ravens cease to fly around the mountain, Kaiser Redbeard will emerge from the mountain and vanquish all the foes of Germany. An interesting article in the *Cornhill Magazine* for April, 1870, pp. 424–434, written by Karl Blind, maintains that the emperor in his crystal cave is really a personification of the Woden or Odin, the Teutonic All-Father.

See also *Fraser's Magazine*, Aug. 1861:

"'This is the way the Cæsar passed:'
So tell the legends thick and fast,
How underneath the Salzburg steeps
He is not dead, but only sleeps,
How, deep within the marble cave,
He slumbers in his living grave,
Till round about the seat of stone
His red beard three times thrice has grown;
But when the waking hour shall come
In the great day of German doom,
When the dry tree on Salzburg plain
Shall bloom and bear its fruit again,
When the long toil of German thought
Its destined resting-place has wrought,
When Germany with all her might
From Rhine to Danube shall unite:
Then, in the mountain's shaggy side,
The brazen gates shall open wide,
And to that long expected day
Shall Cæsar pass once more that way."

165. *Swithiod.* See on 112 above.

180. *Certes.* Verily.

181–189. *It was . . . seemed peace.* The first of many passages of this general character scattered throughout *The Earthly Paradise.* Morris, like Tennyson, excels in descriptions of this kind.

188. *Fisher-cobles.* A *coble* is a boat used in the herring fishery.

195. *They bore our Saviour Christ.* The Viaticum, or Eucharist, administered to dying persons. In Roman Catholic countries, when the Host is borne through the streets on its way from the church to the bedside of the dying, the priests bearing it are preceded by an acolyte ringing a small bell, at the sound of which persons kneel or bow their heads till the procession has passed.

206. *Though my blood be not vile.* Rolf means that though he is poor his rank nevertheless is an honorable one.

208. *Aught like to gold.* See on 156 above.

210. *Charles of Blois.* At the death of John III. of Brittany, in 1341, Charles of Blois, nephew of Philip of France, laid claim to the duchy of Brittany in right of his wife Joan, niece of John III. Philip supported the claims of his nephew, while Edward III. of England upheld the rights of John of Montfort, third brother of John III. John of Montfort dying in 1345, his wife, aided by England, carried on the war against Charles of Blois for nineteen years. The latter was taken prisoner in 1347 and imprisoned in the Tower of London for nine years, during which time his wife Joan conducted the war as valiantly as Joan of Montfort was doing for her party. After Charles of Blois regained his liberty he returned to Brittany and was killed in the battle of Auray, Sept. 29, 1364. This event ended the long struggle; but Joan his wife outlived the death of her husband and the loss of her duchy for twenty years.

226. *Bordeaux wine.* The wines exported from Bordeaux are considered the most excellent of French wines. The wine-producing district in the vicinity of Bordeaux, in the department of Gironde, once the old province of Guienne, is known as the Bordelais. In this district more than 350,000 acres are devoted to vineyards. To the red wines exported from Médoc, one of the districts of the Bordelais, to Great Britain and the United States the general term "claret" is applied, a name derived from *clairet*, which means a clarified wine. See on 13 above.

238. *Apparelled.* Metrically a quadrisyllable, as elsewhere in *The Earthly Paradise.*

241. *Saint Bride.* The church dedicated to Saint Bridget of Sweden. This saint founded the order of the Brigittines, and is one of the patron saints of Sweden.

250. *King Tryggve.* One of the under kings of Norway in the tenth century. He was murdered by the order of Queen Gunhild, widow of Eric Blood-axe. His widow, Astrid, gave birth to a son shortly after, who became known as the famous Olaf Tryggveson. Relentlessly pursued by Gunhild, she fled to Russia, where she was parted from her son and sold as a slave.

Hill, called *mound* in 292 below; probably one of the numerous tumuli found in Norway and Sweden, from which in pagan times the

population were addressed by their rulers at the Things. Near old Upsal there are or were, according to Professor Verelius, 669 of these mounds, three of which are called *Kings-hogarne* (the king's mounds). The circumference of these mounds is about eight hundred feet, and the height about ninety. According to some antiquaries they are natural sandhills reduced to regular shape by men.

265. *My father's axe.* The *twibil* mentioned in 103.

275. *Black shadow and gray flood.* The sharp contrast between shadow and light under the rays of the moon is admirably given in this line.

276. *The lead.* In mediæval times the roofs of important buildings, such as churches, castles, and the like, were usually covered with a coating of lead. In modern times the use of lead for this purpose is practically abandoned except for gutters and joints.

280. *Stricken with death.* An allusion to the pestilence before mentioned in 169.

286. *That shrill-tinkling bell.* Cf. 194 above.

296. *The holy rood.* The cross.

324. *Viken.* The country north of the Gotha River forming the great bight of the coast of Norway. *Vik* means a small bay or arm of the sea. A *vik* is, however, less in extent than a fjord, being usually a small crescent-shaped inlet; and from this is derived the Norse saying, "Let there be a fjord between kinsmen, but a creek between friends," meaning that kinship is not always to be trusted so implicitly as friendship.

325. *Tryggve Olaf's son.* Tryggve Olafsson must not be confounded with the famous Olaf Tryggvesson. As the name Tryggvesson implies, this latter personage was the son of Tryggve. Tryggve was the son of Olaf the upper king of Viken.

Olaf's sire was King Harald Haarfager. This elder Olaf and Harald were worshippers of Odin and the other gods of the Norse mythology.

327–329. *Unto whose line, etc.* Rolf must mean that he is descended from the line of Harald Haarfager, the grandfather of Tryggve Olafsson, through Lodin, a Norwegian merchant, who married Astrid, the widow of Tryggve Olafsson and mother of Olaf Tryggvesson. This Astrid, however, had a daughter of the same name married to Erling Skialgsson, and Erling may be the person referred to by Rolf as his ancestor. In this case *King Olaf* is Olaf Tryggvesson; in the other, Tryggve Olafsson is meant. Tryggve Olafsson would hardly be called King Olaf, whose widow Astrid is said to be; and the other Astrid was the *sister* of Olaf Tryggvesson, and not the *widow* of an Olaf.

336. *The Vineland voyage.* In 1697 the Swedish antiquary Peringskiöld published the first edition of the *Heimskringla*, in which are inserted in the *Saga of Olaf Tryggvesson* eight chapters describing the discovery of America, or Vinland, by Leif, the son of Eric the Red, an Icelandic Viking, who had been banished from Iceland to Greenland. Various portions of the New England coast are conjectured by antiquaries to have been the abode of Leif's colony. Baron Nordenskiöld, the Swedish explorer, says, in a letter quoted by Professor Horsford in a speech at the unveiling of the statue of Leif in Boston in October, 1887: "Of so much we are fully assured, that the principal facts stated in the

simple narrative of the Sagas can be fully relied upon. The Northmen made numerous long voyages out from Greenland for centuries (the historical records give a period of over three hundred years), and established colonies on the American continent." Professor Magnŭsson, the Icelandic scholar, in a letter quoted by Professor Horsford in the same address, says: "There is no learned body in Europe that even breathes a doubt about the question of the settlement of Vinland by Northmen."

337. *Swegder's search for Godheim.* Snorro Sturleson, in the *Heimskringla*, says of Swegder, who was one of the Yngling family of kings: "Swegder took the kingdom after his father, and he made a solemn vow to seek Godheim and Odin. He went with twelve men through the world, and came to Turkland and the Great Sweden (Swithiod the Greater), where he found many of his connections. He was five years on this journey; and when he returned home to Sweden he remained there some time. . . . Swegder went out afterwards to seek again for Godheim, and came to a mansion on the east side of Sweden, called Stein, where there was a stone as big as a large house. In the evening, after sunset, as Swegder was going from the drinking-table to his sleeping-room, he cast his eye upon the stone, and saw that a dwarf was sitting under it. Swegder and his men were very drunk, and they ran towards the stone. The dwarf stood in the door, and called to Swegder and told him to come in, and he should see Odin. Swegder ran into the stone, which instantly closed behind him, and Swegder never came back. Throdolf of Huine says of this: —

> By Diurnir's[1] elfin race,
> Who haunt the cliffs and shun day's fall,
> The valiant Swegdir was deceived,
> The elf's false words the king believed.
> The dauntless hero, rushing on,
> Passed through the yawning mouth of stone.
> It yawned, — it shut, — the hero fell,
> In Saekmime's[2] hall where giants dwell.' "

345. *Tales where truth perchance touched lies.* The legendary character of the early history of all nations is admirably characterized in this phrase.

348. *Leif the son of Eric.* See 336 above. Biarne Heriulfsson, an Icelander, however, is supposed to have discovered Newfoundland about 986, some fourteen years before the voyage of Leif, which occurred about 1000. A bronze statue of Leif, by Miss Anne Whitney, was unveiled in Boston, Massachusetts, with appropriate ceremonies, on Oct. 29, 1887.

351. *Rede.* Counsel, as in 370 below. Cf. *Hamlet*, i. 3. 50:

> "Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
> And recks not his own rede."

371. *As now.* A construction rarely met with now, but common in old English.

[1] Diurnir, the second chief of the dwarfs or elves.
[2] Saekmimer, the giant of the rocks.

388. *Stories true or feigned.* Cf. 320. Rolf's conscience seems to have been as accommodating as that of Nicholas in regard to the means whereby their numbers were increased.

395. *Jutland.* An irregularly shaped peninsula constituting one of the provinces of Denmark. It was anciently the country of the Jutes, a Germanic or Scandinavian tribe. Viborg is the capital of the province, and Aarhuus the principal commercial town.

Land's End. A headland projecting into the Atlantic at the western extremity of Cornwall. It was known to the ancients as *Bolerium Promontorium*, and is the most western point of Great Britain. It is composed of granite cliffs rising sixty feet above the water.

399. *Erst.* Once, formerly.

403. *Guines.* A village in France, seven miles south of Calais.

425. *The lilies*, etc. At this time, and for several succeeding centuries, the English monarchs claimed to be rulers of France, also in right of their French possessions; and on their banners and battle-standards the lilies emblazoned on the French banners were quartered upon their own.

433. *And who knows now*, etc. The king mentioned here is Edward III. of England. Since the Wanderers left Europe behind them, they of course have had no tidings of the subsequent course of events there.

444. *Remembered.* Metrically a quadrisyllable, as in 18 of the *Apology*.

446. *Adrad.* The old English form of *adread.*

450. *My old follies*, etc. The sight of the fleet of the English king has filled the mind of the young Rolf with warlike aspirations, and for the time quite put to flight his longings for the Earthly Paradise.

461–468. *Broad-browed he was . . . name.* Morris has given here in few words a most masterly description of Edward, one that deals not wholly with externals, but is concerned with mental appearance as well. The monarch has reached middle life, and the fire of youthful enthusiasm has passed from the once eager eyes to be succeeded by the keen, penetrating gaze that reads men and motives at a glance. He knows, too, that, whatever fame may report of him, his best years are past with the ardor that infused them.

472. *Gerfalcon.* Spelled also *gyrfalcon.* Falcons and hawks were allotted to men according to station. Gerfalcons were the property of royalty, earls might keep the peregrine, yeomen the goshawk, priests the sparrow-hawk, and knaves or servants the little-valued kestrel.

478. *The prince.* Edward the Black Prince, born at Woodstock, England, June 15, 1330, died at Westminster, June 8, 1376.

480. *Coronel.* Properly the head of a jousting lance which terminated in three points like a little crown, but here used in place of *coronet.* "The coronet of the Prince of Wales is composed of a circle or fillet of gold; on the edge four crosses pattée between as many fleurs-de-lis, and from the two centre crosses an arch surmounted by a mound and cross" (*Imp. Dict.*).

489. *Pile.* A term in heraldry used to denote one of the simpler devices of the escutcheon. It is in the form of a wedge with the point downwards.

493. *In French.* Norman French was still the language of the English court at this period.

496. *The narrow seas.* The Dover Straits.

497. *The highest bark.* That is, the Rose-Garland.

501. *Thou, fair sir.* The king is speaking to Rolf, who commands the Rose-Garland. Cf. 373.

506. *Safest still in steel,* etc. Note the alliteration in this line.

513. *My fellow gazed on me.* The superb array of the English fleet and the persuasive words of Edward, gentle yet well contrived to stir young blood, have nearly made a conquest of Rolf, who flushes in his perplexity. He is bound by oath to his fellows; but here is an unlooked-for temptation, and it finds him weak to resist. Nicholas, seeing clearly enough the state of his young companion's mind, can hardly wait for the end of the king's speech before he interposes his plea.

519. *Thy foes.* Nicholas refers to Charles of Blois, mentioned in 210 above and again in 523 below.

522. *Dinan.* A town of Brittany, in the department of Côtes-du-Nord, on the Rance, thirty miles northwest of Rennes. It was often besieged in the Middle Ages, and in 1359, under Du Guesclin, successfully resisted an English siege.

542. *Flash not thy banner,* etc. It is a very vivid picture that the lines of Morris give us just here. On the king's ship the prince and the nobles in gorgeous armor are gathered about the king, who is regarding with the tolerant smile of middle age the persons and vessels of the Wanderers. Before him stands Nicholas beseeching, and with one hand holding back the impetuous Rolf, who presses forward with the blush which the king's words have called up still on his cheeks.

547. *O king,* etc. In these lines and in the forty which follow we have a glimpse of the darker side of life in the Middle Ages, — the side that histories show us only incidentally. The armies of France and England were continually at strife within the western duchies of France, and the wretched inhabitants seldom knew the blessings of peace for any long period.

552. *Vannes.* A town on the south coast of Brittany, sixty-one miles northwest of Nantes. It is at present the capital of the department of Morbihan, and contains some 15,000 people.

577. *Shoon and hosen.* The old plural forms of *shoe* and *hose.*

604. *The landless sea to gain.* They are now in Dover Straits, and Nicholas is anxious to be upon the ocean itself. Cf. 353 above.

606–636. *A mocking smile,* etc. To the Black Prince the talk of Nicholas seems but the words of the idlest visionary, but to Edward, who sees the fairest part of his life behind him, they sound very differently. For these adventurers the world is wide, but his dreams of universal conquest are all over, and he realizes that the world will never see another Alexander. He has lived long enough to know how fleeting is the fame of kings; and it is with this half-bitter thought in mind that he says, but more to himself than to Rolf and Nicholas perhaps, that his only claim to human remembrance may be the fact that he once talked with them ere they crossed the unknown sea.

607–609. *He who carried . . . low.* The war-beaten knight mentioned in 487, namely, Sir John Chandos. Cf. 521.

649. *Scalds.* The ancient Scandinavian poets and historiographers; reciters and singers of heroic poems, etc., among the Norsemen; more rarely and less properly bards among any of the Teutonic nations or tribes. (Written also *skalds.*)

657, 658. *The land he came from . . . lee.* They are now entering the English Channel; and the morning sun striking full upon the white cliffs of England makes that country seem almost as near as France, which is closer at hand.

678. *Blood of this our sunburnt land.* The wine of the country.

695. *Southing.* In navigation the difference of latitude made by a ship in sailing southward.

721. *Biarmeland.* The country of a mediæval people or tribe of the Russian Empire dwelling on the borders of the White Sea near the mouth of the Dwina. The Perms of the present day are their descendants. In the *Saga of King Olaf*, chapter 143, is an account of an expedition sent by Olaf to Biarmeland.

738. *The intertwined slow waves.* The use of the word *intertwined* is a peculiarly apt one here, as any one who has noted the motion of slowly heaving waters will readily acknowledge.

761. *The ridges*, etc. Cf. the expression *ridgy sea* in 788, and *ridgy seas* in 812 below.

786. *The wrack.* The earlier form of the word *wreck.* It is applied to seaweeds generally, but more especially when tossed on shore by the waves. "A marine plant (*Zostera marina*), out of which kelp is made, and which is also of great utility as a manure; — sometimes called *sea-wrack* or *sea-wreck*, *sea-oak*, and *sea-tangle.* It is found on rocks left dry at low water. The stalk runs along the middle of the leaf, and is terminated by watery bladders" (Wb.). Cf. *Atalanta's Race*, iii. 100.

797–804. *Sirs . . . die.* This passage, where the gray-haired, prematurely aged Rolf turns aside from the course of his narration to meditate a moment on the past joy that was so baseless, has always seemed to us one of the very finest portions of the *Prologue.*

806. *When like an image*, etc. When my former self comes to seem like something external to myself.

825. *The hazy edges*, etc. The misty blending together of sea and sky was surely never better characterized than in this line.

850. *Told of the island*, etc. The Genoese navigators were among the most daring sailors of mediæval times. It has been supposed that they were the discoverers of the Azores or Western Islands, eight hundred miles west of Portugal; but of this the evidence is not conclusive. These islands are first found distinctly marked on a map dated 1351.

869. *But what availed*, etc. To men who felt themselves drawing near to the goal of all their most extravagant aspirations, the cautions of Laurence would naturally carry very little weight.

881–883. *He answered me . . . heaven.* Nicholas, filled with "much lore of many lands," cannot resist this opportunity to discourse learnedly in reply to Rolf's questions, although, as his questioner at the time seems to have dimly fancied, he had no certain knowledge.

917. *The sharp ripple slept.* Cf. Southey, *Inchcape Rock:*

"No stir in the air, no stir in the sea,
The ship was as still as she might be;
Her sails from heaven received no motion,
Her keel was steady in the ocean."

941. *Roll among fair flowers.* Cf. Tennyson, *Voyage of Maeldune:*

"And we came to the Isle of Flowers: their breath met us out on the seas,
For the Spring and the middle Summer sat each on the lap of the breeze;
And the red passion-flower to the cliffs, and the dark-blue clematis, clung,
And starr'd with a myriad blossom the long convolvulus hung;
And the topmost spire of the mountain was lilies in lieu of snow,
And the lilies like glaciers winded down, running out below
Thro' the fire of the tulip and poppy, the blaze of gorse, and the blush
Of millions of roses that sprang without leaf or a thorn from the bush;
And the whole isle-side flashing down from the peak without ever a tree
Swept like a torrent of gems from the sky to the blue of the sea;
And we roll'd upon capes of crocus and vaunted our kith and our kin,
And we wallow'd in beds of lilies, and chanted the triumph of Finn,
Till each like a golden image was pollen'd from head to feet
And each was as dry as a cricket, with thirst in the middle-day heat."

972. *Unto winter now at home it grew.* They had left home in September, nearly two months before.

978. *We weighed.* The nautical phrase *weighed anchor* is to be understood here.

982. *Scarped white hill.* A hill with a perpendicular or precipitous front. Cf. *Jason*, xiv. 42: "The high scarped land."

984. *Won.* The verb *win* is here used in the sense of to come. *We won* = we came. Occasionally it conveys the idea of coming with toil or difficulty.

985. *Ran up it with the flood.* That is, with the tide.

998. *Pining for old things.* A sure sign, had Kirstin's companions known how to interpret it, that they were *not* yet come to the earthly paradise they sought.

1053. *They did but seem to show our heaven anigh.* Not even yet do the Wanderers doubt that they have reached the land they have sought, but their confidence is not destined to last much longer. Cf. 1123 below.

1159. *Wattle-work.* A network of closely interwoven twigs and branches.

1206. *Gold people of antiquity.* The allusion here is probably to the Golden Age of mythology, when man had not yet lapsed from innocence. It is sometimes called the Saturnian age, from Saturn, who is supposed to have reigned then. Cf. Longfellow, *King Robert of Sicily:*

"Days came and went, and now returned again
To Sicily the old Saturnian reign.
Under the Angel's governance benign
The happy island danced with corn and wine."

1259. *We told them all.* That is, to Nicholas and those who had remained on ship.

1260–1263. This is an extremely natural touch, wherein the explorers, whose hearts are beginning to fail them, are made to appear to their friends on ship radiant with hopefulness.

1282. *Bedesmen.* Spelled also *beadsmen.* Men who were employed in praying, usually for another, were called beadsmen; but Morris probably uses the word in its Scotch signification, — privileged beggars. "A long blue gown, with a pewter badge on the right arm; two or three wallets for holding the different kinds of meal, when he received his charity, . . . all these at once marked a beggar by profession, and one of that privileged class which are called in Scotland the king's *bedesmen*, or, vulgarly, bluegowns" (Sir Walter Scott).

1298. *To the longed-for west.* The gale being a westerly one, blowing "from off the land," had driven them in the direction whence they had come.

1326. *That twice-won shore.* They seem from this to have landed upon another part of the same country whence the storm had driven them.

1329. *Pleasance.* A pleasure-ground.

1378. *The many chances of the night.* Cf. Tennyson, *The Princess*, iv. 205: "The chances of the dark."

1385. *Dead*, etc. From the time the nurse of Nicholas was killed by an arrow in the cornfield under the wall of Vannes until now when his wife Kirstin lies dead before him, death has been near him. Months before he had said to King Edward, —

> "Since I could walk a yard or twain,
> Or utter anything but cries of pain,
> Death was before me."

And now the sharpest blow of all has come, and the Earthly Paradise has vanished.

1424. *Bushments.* Thickets, small patches of woodland. In *The Man Born to be King*, 129, *bushment* is used, in place of the more familiar *ambush.*

1427. *Unwares.* Undesignedly. Shakespeare makes use of the word but twice; once in 3 *Henry VI.*, and again in *Troilus and Cressida.*

1455. *Ness.* A headland or promontory, either jutting from the land into the sea or standing forth boldly from the highlands into the plain. The word is frequently used by Morris. Cf. *Sigurd:* "So he comes to that ness of the mountains and Gripir's garden steep."

1484–1486. *So little feared*, etc. The meaning of this passage is evidently that the Wanderers, who feared little the tumbling sea, or more literally whom it did not dismay, would fear the folk beyond the mountains as little. The timid people of the region, however, fearing that their visitors will come to harm, endeavor to dissuade them from departing.

1553. *The land*, etc. Norway.

1574. *Death or life*, etc. That is, if I die in this attempt I shall gain Paradise in that way, and if I live I shall surely find the Earthly Paradise I seek.

1588. *Soothly.* Rather.

1598. *Clustered confusedly.* The tangle of foothills that usually surround the base of a mountain, or group of mountains, is well characterized in this brief phrase.

1629. *Their way of banqueting.* Cf. 1616 above.

1633. *Then I knew.* Surely, though the Earthly Paradise still eluded their search, they had eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge in bitter truth.

1648. *Cope.* Literally, something extended over the head, like the arch of the sky or the roof of a house. Here, as applied to mountains, it is probably used in the sense of *overhanging*. Cf. Clough, *Easter Day:*

> "Of all the creatures under heaven's wide cope
> We are most hopeless, who had once most hope."

1668. *Lustihead.* Vigor, or, perhaps here, courage.

1700. *While from*, etc. The company of mariners has now separated into three bands, — those returning to Norway in the Fighting Man; those gathered on the deck of the Rose-Garland, intending still to pursue the quest; and those who have elected to remain on land. These last are the "familiar gray-eyed faces" breaking "the dark line of the outland folk" on the shore. Rolf does not linger in his narrative over the details of this parting. But the mind readily supplies the missing features. Those on board the Fighting Man are setting forth on almost as forlorn a hope in their voyage to Norway as are their friends on the Rose-Garland who still pursue their first intent. We will "at least *seek* for the happy home forgotten once," they seem to say; but the cheer they send back in answer to the "feeble farewell cry" of their late comrades, is tremulous with tears, and the shout of parting that goes up from those on shore is more a wail than a shout, for they know in their hearts that they will never again behold the faces of those on the eastward-pointing Fighting Man or the westward-moving Rose-Garland.

1702. *Confused.* Metrically a trisyllable here.

1764. *Whiles.* Sometimes, or at times, as in 2263 below.

1798. *Had dreamed*, etc. To have dreamed of an Earthly Paradise where death was unknown, to have missed it and now to come to a fair strange land and to be worshipped as gods, must have seemed to the Wanderers the bitterest irony of fate, knowing as they now did how little godlike they were, and that the death they had in vain tried to escape would surely not spare any of them.

1834. *Walled with white walls*, etc. The city described is patterned after the ideals of the mediæval architects, walled and towered and brilliant with color. It is such towns as these that we find pictured in illuminated books of the Middle Ages, in copies of Froissart and of Monstrelet.

1841. *Had we seen such*, etc. But that time is over: they do not now look for their goal in every island shining fair in the distance or gleaming city set with lofty towers; they "sit quietly" now, and think "of many things," — of their lost home and their ruined hopes.

1856. *After their way.* That is, after the custom of young men of that land.

1865, 1866. *Hearkening . . . to be.* Cf. Tennyson, *Ode to the Duke of Wellington*, 252, 253:

> "The tides of music's golden sea
> Setting towards eternity."

1873. *We deemed who knew*, etc. As it seemed to us, who but imperfectly understood his language.

1884. *Threescore years and ten.* As Rolf was but twenty (cf. 1938 below) when they left Norway, this would make their search already fifty years long; but all that is implied in this passage is merely that their long and fruitless quest and their successive disappointments have given them the appearance of aged men. Cf. 1934 below.

1890. *That held it while*, etc. Their hope faded when from their vessel they saw no land or only barren shores and miserable people, but revived whenever happier scenes met their gaze.

1922. *At whiles.* At times.

1934. *The gray fieldfare.* "A bird of the genus *Turdus* (*Turdus pilaris*), about ten inches in length, the back and greater coverts of the wings of a fine deep chestnut, and the tail black. The fieldfares pass the summer in the northern parts of Europe, but visit Great Britain in winter" (*Imp. Dict.*).

1935. *The thorn.* A name common to several prickly shrubs, as the blackthorn, buckthorn, etc., but more especially used to designate trees and shrubs of the genus *Cratægus*, of which the common hawthorn is the best-known species.

1939. *Viken.* See on 324 above.

1954, 1955. *Such draughts . . . of old.* An allusion to the Egyptian hieroglyphs or picture-writings, specimens of which Rolf had seen at Constantinople in his youth.

1982. *Harbingered.* Literally, preceded by a harbinger.

2004. *To redress.* To alter or reverse. Rolf means that their first sin lay in their attempt to change the decree of God that all men must die.

2017–2041. *Two gates . . . all is done.* Note the difference in the movement of the lines in this fine passage. In the first half the lines are even and musical and in keeping with the subject, just as in the latter part they grow somewhat rugged and less rhythmical on account of the contrast in the thought.

2042. *Youth twice won.* Bowed with trouble and disappointments, they had in this happy land thrown aside the burden of their cares and renewed their youth, or rather taken fresh delight in it, since it was not yet over and past.

2048. *The brown bird.* The nightingale. Cf. Swinburne, *Atalanta in Calydon:*

"The brown bright nightingale amorous."

2081. *Such-like dreariness.* Instead of what he sought from the priests, he could hear only such profitless tales as these.

2100. *Drearihead.* Dreariness, gloominess.

2114. *Something more than doubt.* Great is the contrast between the self-confident youths who sailed out of Drontheim Fjord long years before, and the sober, chastened spirits who now plan to resume their journey. Then they looked for a speedy realization of their dreams, but now they muse on possible failure even while they plan.

2186. *Grisly eld.* Hoary age.

2201, 2202. *The other folk*, etc. The people with whom Rolf and his comrades had dwelt, who were to be suffered to continue under the yoke of the fear of death.

2239. *With no long words*, etc. A generation has grown up since the Wanderers came. The enthusiasm of their fathers at the coming of Rolf and his companions has dulled with the lapse of time, and to this younger generation they are curious rather than dear.

2260. *Were.* Here, as very frequently in English (as distinguished from American) verse, pronounced as if written *ware*. Cf. *Love is Enough:*

> "Look, Joan! if on this side she were
> Almost my hand might touch her hair."

2263. *Whiles.* See on 1764 above.

2276. *Ness.* See on 1455 above.

2300. *Outland.* Foreign, as in 1703 above.

2303–2327. *Peace . . . night.* There is little in the *Prologue*, beautiful as it all is, much finer than this passage. Peace, that laps all Nature in its embrace on this summer night, is not reflected in the hearts of the Wanderers, near as they think themselves to their hearts' desire. For now that it is so close at hand, as they think, misgivings press upon them. Can they endure to leave *all* of the past behind? In the world they think to leave are those once dear to them who must now be forgotten and become as things that are not. No wonder that "heaven just gained was scarcely all a gain." Tossed about between to-morrow's hopes and yesterday's regrets, they could neither rightly estimate the worth of the treasure they hoped to enjoy, nor appreciate fully the sorrows of the men they had known and who could never share this joy with them. The thoughtless selfishness of youth has given place now to the retrospective sadness of middle life. Cf. O. W. Holmes, *Homesick in Heaven:*

> "Children of earth, our half-weaned nature clings
> To earth's fond memories, and her whispered name
> Untunes our quivering lips, our saddened strings;
>
> "For there we loved, and where we love is home,
> Home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts,
> Though o'er us shine the jasper-lighted dome: —
> The chain may lengthen, but it never parts!"

2366. *Since bow and axe*, etc. Cf. 1995 above.

2367. *Song and minstrelsy.* With song and singers, or perhaps players upon the harp and horn before mentioned. Cf. Coleridge, *Ancient Mariner:*

> "The bride hath paced into the hall,
> Red as a rose is she;
> Nodding their heads before her goes
> The merry minstrelsy."

2380. *Within the precinct.* Within the enclosure beyond the brazen gate.

2391. *Foursquare.* The quadrangle is a favorite dimension with Morris, as with Tennyson.

2410. *Crooning low songs.* As *to croon* means "to sing in a low tone or murmur softly," the adjective *low* is redundant here. The word is used more accurately in *Love is Enough:*

> "His lips crooned complaining, as onward he stumbled."

2460. *Against the law of kind.* That is, contrary to the law that governs human existence.

2477. *Ye are our gods on earth.* The object of this capture of the Wanderers is that their captors may obtain whatever of good fortune their presence in any land may be supposed to bring.

2510. *Our friends they slew.* This is wellnigh the sharpest blow of all, that the simple, trustful natives who so long ago joined their fortunes to those of the Wanderers should now be offered up in sacrifice to them. The remorseful thought will suggest itself, that but for them the friendly forest folk might have lived a happy life and died a peaceful death in their own land.

2551. *Nigh the altar-stead.* Near the altar.

2573. *Stopped short suddenly.* There is here correspondence of sound to the sense, as well as alliteration.

2642. *Drave.* The old imperfect tense of *drive.*

2658. *Fearful.* Timid, full of fear. A Shakespearian use of the adjective. Cf. *K. John,* iv. 2. 106: "A fearful eye thou hast."

2661. *Scarcely could we choose.* Their flight was so hasty that they "seized on the nighest ship," without pausing to see which of the five might contain food for their voyage.

2665. *I loved the most of all men.* Cf. Beaumont and Fletcher, *Fair Maid of the Inn,* where Alberto says to Prospero:

> "I do protest I have no kind of pleasure
> In anything but in thy friendship,
> I must ever except that."

2677. *We turned and left him,* etc. Cf. Joaquin Miller, *Walker in Nicaragua:*

> "I said some things with folded hands,
> Soft whispered to the dim sea-sound,
> And eyes held humbly to the ground,
> And frail knees sunken in the sands.
> He had done more than this for me,
> And yet I could not well do more:
> I turned me down the olive shore,
> And set a sad face to the sea."

2682. *Our old friends.* Cf. 2654 above.

2711. *These kind people.* The peasants mentioned in 50.

2751. *Our living chronicle.* The delicacy with which the elder of the city puts aside the thanks of the Wanderers and transfers to his own people the burden of obligation, is an exquisite touch. It is true enough that these are the first people from Europe who have ever reached that land since their Grecian ancestors discovered it, and their coming is welcome for that if for no other reason; but a soul touched to less fine issues than that of the kindly elder of the city would not have been moved to state it so delicately as to take from his guests all sense of embarrassed gratitude.

2759. A writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* observes: "The *Prologue* is, in our judgment, too long. . . . This meeting of the sons of Greece and Norway is well imagined; but the conception is worked out too diffusely, so as to tempt all but very conscientious people to skip the *Prologue* in their impatience for the more tempting things beyond. Moreover, such a history as this, of vain endeavor and hopeless failure, is too sombre an introduction for the tales which follow." As to whether the *Prologue* is too long or not, opinions will probably always widely differ as long as there remains a large class of readers whose principal object in reading appears to be to get to the end of a book. To the other part of the reviewer's objection it can be urged that the writer's conception of his task did not admit of a lighter or gayer narrative, as any careful study of his motive will show.

THE AUTHOR TO THE READER.

1. *Think, listener.* By his choice of the word *listener* instead of *reader*, the poet brings his audience just so much nearer to him. We are no longer turning the pages of a book, we are in his very presence and hearkening eagerly to his words. In the lines which follow he alludes in very graceful figures to the source of his inspiration, likening it to a flowery land in which he was so fortunate as to set foot.

15. *Wherefrom.* Not found in any of the dictionaries, and possibly a compound of the poet's own coining.

20. *Flickering.* An illustration of the poet's careful choice of adjectives. He wished to give in one word the impressions of movement and the brilliant color of the autumnal season; and the term *flicker*, usually applied to the movement of flame, conveys his meaning with exactness. A forcible use of the word occurs in Swinburne, *Atalanta in Calydon:*

"Thy speech flickers like a blown-out flame."

22. *The white conqueror.* Winter.

25. *The varying land.* The meaning of this is implied in 17–22.

MARCH.

"The lyrical poems interspersed between the legends are the only modern things, and even those are tender little bits of English landscape-painting that might have been executed centuries ago" (T. W. Higginson). Skelton says: "They fit into the narrative; or rather the narrative there and then bursts, as it were, into flower, — the pure feeling seeking form in song, and rising into a sweeter and rarer music."

1. *Slayer of the winter.* This address to March as the "slayer," receives additional force from the thought of the war-god Mars which the term thus applied is sure to suggest.

2. *O welcome*, etc. Cf. W. D. Howells, *In Earliest Spring;* Frederick Tennyson, *First of March;* Bryant, *March;* Payne, *Bacchic of Spring;*

and Scollard, *A Masque of March*, for similar allusions to March as the harbinger of summer

6. *The throstle.* The *Turdus musicus.* It is known as the song-thrush, throstle, and mavis, and is one of the finest of European singing birds. It is nine inches long, yellowish-brown above, tinged with red on the head; and with yellowish neck and breast.

11. *Thy brown birds.* Probably not the throstle or song-thrush mentioned in 6, but the missel-thrush, the largest of the European thrushes, is here meant. It is sometimes heard as early as February. In color, it is mainly grayish-brown.

PRELUDE TO ATALANTA'S RACE.

16–32. *Therefore, . . . done.* Skelton calls attention to this passage as a specimen of the poet's strong, rapid, effective treatment of landscape.

28. *The dark full stream.* That is, swollen by the autumn rains and embrowned by the leaves which have fallen into it.

33. *Saint Luke's short summer.* Saint Luke's Day is October 18; but the poet's description better suits the season called Saint Martin's Summer, the brief period of soft, hazy weather which comes about the time of Saint Martin's Day, November 11. The American Indian Summer is the counterpart of the English Saint Martin's Summer. A writer in *Notes and Queries*, 4th series, vol. vi., confirms what we have just said. He says: "The few hot days (often called the Indian Summer in the United States) which occur in the autumn may be considered as Saint Luke's little summer, the festival of Saint Luke falling on October 18; but the expression more frequently used is 'L'été de *la* Saint Martin;' *i. e.*, de la fête de Saint Martin, which is on November 11, when a south wind brings on a few warm days before the snows of winter."

61. *Two solemn feasts.* A captious Quarterly Reviewer remarks that "the institution of monthly feasts for the mere purpose of telling stories is a somewhat clumsy contrivance for connecting the tales with the introduction, and for giving the poet an excuse for a graceful prelude to every month of the year." An objection like this comes with very ill grace from an English writer whose countrymen seize eagerly enough upon the smallest pretext for public dinner-giving.

ATALANTA'S RACE.

Atalanta was the daughter of Iasos, or Iasion, a descendant of Arcas, and Clymene the daughter of Minas. Her father reigned in Arcadia. He was anxious for male offspring, and, on his wife's bringing forth a female, he exposed the babe in the mountains, where she was suckled by a bear, and at last found by some hunters who reared her. She followed the chase, and was alike distinguished for beauty and courage.

She took part in the Argonautic Expedition; was at the Calydonian hunt, and at the funeral games of Pelias she won the prize in wrestling from Peleus. Atalanta was afterwards recognized by her parents. Her father wishing her to marry, she consented; but only on condition that her suitors should run a race with her in the following manner: They were to run without arms, and she was to carry a dart in her hand. Her lovers were to start first, and whoever arrived at the goal before her would be made her husband, but all those whom she overtook were to be killed by the dart with which she had armed herself. As she was almost invincible in running, many of her suitors perished in the attempt, and their heads were fixed round the place of contest, when Milanion, her cousin, offered himself as a competitor. Venus had presented him with three golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides, or, according to others, from a garden in Cyprus; and as soon as he had started in the course, he artfully threw down the apples at some distance from each other. While Atalanta stopped to gather them Milanion won the race. Other authorities, however, make the name of the victor Hippomenes. According to other accounts, Atalanta was the daughter of Schœneus, son of Athanias, and therefore a Bœotian. There is no necessity for supposing two of the same name, as has usually been done. They are only examples of different appropriations of the same legends. The *Encyc. Brit.*, 9th ed., regards the story of Atalanta as that of two heroines whose adventures became blended into one account. It will be seen that Morris in this poem makes Schœneus an Arcadian king, instead of a Bœotian, and that his account is a blending of the several legends.

"Taken in its bare outlines," says a critic in the *Edinburgh Review*, of January, 1871, "few myths are more repulsive than that of the maiden who stakes her person on the issue of a race in which the penalty for the unsuccessful lover is instant death by the headsman's axe, and who day by day sees human blood poured out, with eyes unmoved and heart untroubled. . . . But although the poet speaks of Atalanta as reared up, like Helen, to be 'a kingdom's curse,' and as making her

> 'city's name accurst
> Among all mothers for its cruelty,'

he does not wish us so to dwell upon this thought as to kill all our sympathy for her when the warm human feeling wakes up in her heart as Milanion, by the help of a god, and by this help alone, at last outruns her. Neither do we wish it. But we can avoid this only by ceasing to look upon her as human at all."

I.

1. *Arcadian woods.* Arcadia was an inland country of Peloponnesian Greece, surrounded by Achaia on the north, Elis on the west, Messinia and Laconia on the south, and Argolis on the east, and separated from all these States by mountains. It was watered by the Alpheus, the largest river of the Peloponnesus, the Helisson, the Ladon, the Erymanthus, and many smaller streams. From earliest times it was in-

habited by the same race of people, who were noted for their simple mode of life.

10. *Day-long.* The use of this compound in verse is somewhat rare. Cf. Tennyson, *The Brook:*

> "All about the fields you caught
> His weary day-long chirping."

14. *Cornel.* The wood of the cornel-tree. *Cornus*, its botanical name, is derived from *cornu*, a horn, on account of the hardness of the wood. It is thus well fitted for making bows. The cornelian-tree is the same as the cornel. Cf. *Jason*, i. 83:

> "The cornel bow, the woodknife at thy side."

Cornel-wood was used in the making of spears also. Cf. *Jason*, ii. 8:

> "And in his hand two spears of cornel-wood."

28. *King Schœneus' town.* Possibly Tegea or Mantinea, two of the larger cities of Arcadia.

36. *Merry.* Note the transfer of the accent from the second syllable of the foot to the first.

41. *His death-bearing arrows.* In Grecian mythology Apollo and the sun became identical. Sudden deaths of men were attributed to the darts of Apollo, and he was supposed to be the god of pestilence.

62. *A golden image of the sun.* See on 41 above.

63. *The fleet-foot one.* Hermes, or Mercury.

79. *Diana.* The sister of Apollo, the sun god, and goddess of the moon. In Arcadia she was the patroness of hunting and woodland sports. Sudden deaths of women were ascribed to her darts. As patron of the chase she was represented with hunting-shoes, a garment tucked up for speed, and a bow and quiver or a hunting-spear at her back.

127. *The gleaming deadly blade.* Morris departs from the legend here in not making Atalanta the executioner of her unsuccessful suitor, a version more in harmony with our modern sensibilities. It is hard enough to maintain any liking at all for the unsympathetic Atalanta, without being forced to see her slay her unfortunate lovers with her own hand.

II.

5. *Evening.* Metrically a trisyllable.

20–54. *He had vowed . . . are done.* Cf. Prefatory Note.

34. *Two shaggy centaur kings.* Rhœcus and Hylæos, two centaurs who attempted her honor, were slain by her arrows.

44. *The saffron gown.* Brewer's *Handbook* says of this: "The poet has mistaken σαόφρων ('chaste, modest') for *saffron*, a word wholly unknown in the Greek or Latin language. The 'saophron' was a girdle worn by girls indicative of chastity, and not yellow or saffron at all. (*Saffron* is the Arabic *zaphron*, through the French *safran*.)" Cf. Swinburne, *Atalanta in Calydon:* "On her bosom a saffron vest." Cf. iv. 144 and v. 14.

51. *The sea-born one.* Venus. Cf. Swinburne, *Atalanta in Calydon:*

"The weft of the world was untorn
That is woven of the day on the night,
The hair of the hours was not white,
Nor the raiment of time overworn,
When a wonder, a world's delight,
A perilous goddess was born;
And the waves of the sea as she came
Clove, and the foam at her feet,
Fawning, rejoiced to bring forth
A fleshly blossom, a flame
Filling the heavens with heat
To the cold white ends of the north.
And in air the clamorous birds,
And men upon earth that hear
Sweet articulate words
Sweetly divided apart,
And in shallow and channel and mere
The rapid and footless herds,
Rejoiced, being foolish of heart.
For all they said upon earth,
She is fair, she is white like a dove,
And the life of the world in her breath
Breathes, and is born at her birth:
For they knew thee for mother of love
And knew thee not mother of death."

65. *Presently.* Used here in its original meaning of *at once.*

73. *The Dryads.* The Dryades were the wood-nymphs. The Hamadryades were attached to particular trees with which they were born and died, but the Dryades were nymphs or goddesses of the woods in general.

75. *Adonis's bane.* The wild boar. Adonis was killed by a thrust of the tusk of a wild boar that he had wounded.

78. *Argive cities.* Cities of the Grecian State Argolis. The most important towns were Tiryns, Mycenæ, the seat of King Agamemnon, Nemea, noted for its games established in honor of Neptune, and Argos.

90. *Clipped the vine in trust.* Cf. Miss Anne Whitney, *Bertha:*

"I see that all things wait in trust
As feeling afar God's distant ends."

91. *Must.* New wine not yet fermented. Cf. *Jason,* x. 535:

"While in thy sight the must foams out."

Macaulay, *Lays of Ancient Rome:*

"And in the vats of Luna,
This year the must shall foam,
Round the white feet of laughing girls
Whose sires have marched from Rome."

142. *The three-formed goddess.* Diana is sometimes so called, being in various legends identified with Selene or Luna, and with Persephone or Proserpina. As the three-formed goddess, therefore, she ruled in heaven as Selene, the goddess of the sky; on the earth, as Artemis or Diana; and in the underworld, as Persephone.

144. *Saffron gown.* See on 44 above.

146. *Her the moonlit river sees.* An allusion to Diana as bathing by moonlight in the rivers of Arcadia.

149. *The sea-born framer.* See on 51 above.

158. *Hardihead* = hardihood.

159. *Marketstead.* Marketplace.

168. *The friend of Artemis.* See on 146.

207. *A sleepy garland*, etc. A poppy wreath; the meaning being that unless the king could put his soul at ease as well as his body, and give him the gift of entire forgetfulness of the past, typified by the sleepy garland of poppies, he could not escape the meshes of the net of love.

210. *Heading.* Beheading. Cf. *Measure for Measure*, ii. 1. 250: "It is but heading and hanging."

III.

2. *The goddess*, etc. Venus, as is shown by subsequent stanzas.

3. *Turned unto the lion-bearing lands.* That is, towards the north. "The range of the lion was once far more extensive than at present, even within the historic period covering the whole of Africa, the south of Asia, including Syria, Arabia, Asia Minor, Persia, and the greater part of northern and central Hindustan, and also the southeastern portion of Europe, as shown by the well-known story told by Herodotus of the attacks by lions on the camels which carried the baggage of the army of Xerxes on its march through the country of the Pæonians in Macedonia. The very circumstantial account of Herodotus shows that the animal at that time ranged through the country south of the Balkans, through Roumania to the west of the river Carasu, and through Thessaly as far south as the Gulf of Lepanto and the Isthmus of Corinth, having as its western boundary the river Potamo and the Pindus Mountains" (*Encyc. Brit., 9th ed.*).

6. *Murk.* The refuse of fruit after the juice has been extracted. The meaning of the line is, that no creaking grape or olive press was there at work extracting the essence of the fruit shorn closely from the stem.

8. *A close.* The term is loosely applied to any place surrounded by a fence, wall, or hedge, and specifically to the enclosure about a cathedral or abbey. In this latter sense the poet applies it, with the license of his craft, to the space about the temple of Venus in Argolis.

24. *Shone.* The American ed., 1884, misprints *shown*.

54. *Unholpen.* See on *Prologue*, 137.

70. *The golden age.* See on *Prologue*, 1206.

82. *Thy silver feet.* Cf. Miss Katharine Pyle, *A Nymph of Dian:*

> "And I caress my feet, my silver feet,
> Because they bear me onward sure and fleet,
> Because to serve man's will they are not meet."

100. *Wrack.* See on *Prologue*, 786.

115. *Once more their blue and green and red.* Unlike Tennyson, Morris seldom alludes to scientific facts in his verse. Here, however,

the well-known fact of the relation of color to light is very aptly made use of to convey the idea of the approach of morning.

169. *Scrip.* A small bag, usually of leather.

177. *Diana's raiment.* The short garment of the huntress.

178. *Saturn's clime.* See on *Prologue*, 1206.

IV.

22. *Why must she drop*, etc. In this and the succeeding stanza the stirring of a hitherto unknown feeling is very delicately touched upon.

47. *A strong desire there grew.* Cf. iii. 163–166.

72. *The Argive.* Amphidamus, the father of Milanion, was king of Argolis.

75. *Little doubt had she.* It will be noticed that Atalanta's unwonted sensations before the race are not allowed to stay her speed in the least when the race begins. She has too much of the spirit of the athlete to be influenced in such a way at the moment of trial. But fate and the will of the sea-born one are both against her.

78. *Winged.* A dissyllable here.

85–98. *Nor did*, etc. "In the race of Atalanta the cold swift-footed virgin is ultimately defeated through her eagerness to possess the coveted golden apples; but Mr. Morris subtly indicates another cause of defeat — she has gathered the apples and is nearing the goal when she succumbs to *love*. Love is the victor" (Skelton).

V.

1. *Shatter the trumpet.* The transfer of the accent in the first foot of the line to the first syllable, besides imparting variety, adds greatly to the strength of the phrase. *Shatter*, as applied to the trumpet blast, is an exceedingly appropriate word. Cf. Tennyson, *Sir Galahad*, 5:

"The shattering trumpet shrilleth high."

The posts. The starting and turning posts.

5. *The mighty Lord.* Zeus is probably meant here.

6. *Her who unseen*, etc. Venus.

13. *The saffron gown.* See on ii., 44.

16. *Love's servant.* Milanion, the servant of Love, or Venus, who now brings Atalanta to her waiting-maidens.

21. *Her maiden zone.* The girdle worn by maidens until marriage.

In the following poem by Edwin Arnold, it will be seen that he adopts the version of the legend which makes Hippomenes the competitor of Atalanta, and also differs from Morris in making the maid bear the sword of execution.

ATALANTA.

Greek Atalanta! girdled high;
Gold-sandalled; great, majestic Maid;
Her hair bound back with purple tie;
And in her hand th' Arcadian blade,
To doom the suitor who shall choose
Challenge her to the race — and lose.

And at her side Hippomenes!
  Poised on his foremost foot; with soul
Burning to win — if Pallas please —
  That course so perilous, whose goal
Is joy, or Death! Apples of gold
His trembling fingers close enfold.

Oh, girls! 't is English as 't is Greek!
  Life is that race! Train so the soul
That, clad with health and strength, it seek
  A swifter still, who touches goal
First; or — for lack of breath outdone —
Dies gladly, so such race was run!

Yet scorn not, if before your feet
  The golden fruit of life shall roll —
Truth, duty, loving service sweet —
  To stoop to grasp them! So the soul
Runs slower in the race, by these:
But wins them — and Hippomenes!

INTERLUDE.

8, 9. Cf. 797–804 of the *Prologue*.

11, 12. *The fire . . . spire.* Cf. *Prologue*, 2647, 2648.

14. *Waked by sudden silence.* Cf. Tennyson, *Morte d'Arthur:*

> "Sent to sleep with sound,
> And waked with silence."

17. *The light of common day.* Cf. Wordsworth, *Intimations of Immortality:*

> "At length the man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day."

The second tale in *The Earthly Paradise*, that of *The Man Born to be King*, is preceded by the following lines:

PRELUDE TO THE MAN BORN TO BE KING.

Now on the second day [1] that these did meet
March was a-dying through soft days and sweet,
Too hopeful for the wild days yet to be;
But in the hall that ancient company,
Not lacking younger folk that day at least,
Softened by spring were gathered at the feast,
And as the time drew on, throughout the hall
A horn was sounded, giving note to all
That they at last the looked-for tale should hear.

Then spake a Wanderer: "O kind hosts and dear,
Hearken a little unto such a tale
As folk with us will tell in every vale
About the Yule-tide fire, when the snow,
Deep in the passes, letteth men to go
From place to place: now there few great folk be,
Although we upland men have memory
Of ills kings did us; yet, as now indeed
Few have much wealth, few are in utter need.

[1] *The second day.* Cf. 61 of *Prelude to Atalanta's Race.*

Like the wise ants, a kingless, happy folk
We long have been, not galled by any yoke,
But the white leaguer[1] of the winter-tide
Whereby all men at home are bound to bide.
Alas, my folly! how I talk of it,
As though from this place where to-day we sit
The way thereto was short. Ah, would to God
Upon the snow-freed herbage now I trod!
But pardon, sirs; the time goes swiftly by;
Hearken a tale of conquering destiny."

The substance, or argument, of this "tale of conquering destiny" is thus given by Morris: "It was foretold to a great king, that he who should reign after him should be low-born and poor; which thing came to pass in the end, for all that the king could do."

To this story, which includes some of the poet's most delightful descriptions, succeeds the following

INTERLUDE.

He ended; and midst those who heard were some
Who, midst his tale, half dreamed they were at home,
Round the great fire upon the winter night;
And, with the memory of the fresh delight
Wherewith they first had heard that story told,
Forgetting not they were grown weak and old,
Yet felt as if they had at least grown gray
Within the land left for so many a day.
He, with the gestures they were wont to see,
So told his tale, so strange with eld was he,
Just so he stammered, and in just such wise
He sighed, beginning fresh, as their young eyes,
Their ears, in happy days past long ago,
Had ever noted other old men do,
When they, full filled with their quick-coming joys,
Would gaze on old folk as on carven[2] toys.

But he being silent, silently awhile
They mused on these things, masking with a smile
The vain regrets that in their hearts arose,
The while with eager talk the young folk chose
The parts that pleased them; but their elder hosts,
Falling to talk, yet noted well the ghosts
Of old desires within their wasted eyes,
Till one by one the fresh-stirred memories,[3]
So bitter-sweet, flickered and died away;
And as old men may do, whose hopes grew gray
Before their beards, they made a little mirth
Until the great moon rose upon the earth.[4]

[1] *The white leaguer.* The meaning of this passage is, that the only yoke they bore in their former homes was the long winter, which held them indoors as a city is restrained by the besieging camp of an enemy. Cf. Tennyson, *The Princess*, vii. 18: "That disastrous leaguer."

[2] *Carven.* See on 48 of *Prologue.*

[3] *The fresh-stirred memories.* Cf. Jean Ingelow, *Regret:*

"And yet
My days would not be happier days should I forget."

[4] The gradual fading out of hope when life is still vigorous is one of the saddest of human experiences, and the thoughts to which it gives rise are among those which indeed "lie too deep for tears."

APRIL.

1. *Midspring.* A word not found in Webster, Worcester, the Imperial Dictionary, Stormonth, Annandale, or Fallows's Supplemental Dictionary, and probably a happy coinage of the poet's own. Its earliest use by him appears to be in *Concerning Geffray Teste Noire*, 16: "It was mid spring." In *Jason*, x. 329, Morris uses the compound *mid-autumn:* "For on that land the sad *mid-autumn* lay." Like *midspring*, the word *mid-autumn* is not found in the dictionaries. *Besung* is likewise unrecognized by the dictionaries. Cf. *The Love of Alcestis*, iv. 48: "By linnets well besung."

2. *How can I praise*, etc. In spite of the poet's distrust of his own powers he has nevertheless given to the world in these three stanzas one of the most beautiful of April poems.

11. *No more the mavis sings.* Cf. Lewis Morris, *Ode of Life:* "Midsummer mute of song."

15. *Life of all the year.* Cf. Swinburne, *Atalanta in Calydon:*

> "When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces
> The mother of months in meadow or plain
> Fills the shadows and windy places
> With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain."

The third story in *The Earthly Paradise*, which one of the elders of the city tells at the first feast held in April, is *The Doom of King Acrisius*, the prefatory lines of which are as follows:

PRELUDE TO THE DOOM OF KING ACRISIUS.

And now the watery April sun lit up
Upon the fair board golden ewer and cup,
And over the bright silken tapestry
The fresh young boughs were gladdening every eye,
And round the board old faces you might see
Amidst the blossoms and their greenery.
So when the flutes were silent, and the birds,
Rejoicing in their flood of unknown words,
Were heard again, a silken-fastened book
A certain elder from his raiment took,
And said, "O friends, few words are best to-day,
And no new thing I bring you; yet ye may
Be pleased to hear an ancient tale again,
That, told so long ago, doth yet remain
Fresh e'en 'mongst us, far from the Argive land:
Which tale this book, writ wholly by mine hand,
Holds gathered up as I have heard it told.
"Surely I fear me, midst the ancient gold
Base metal ye will light on here and there,
Though I have noted everything with care
And with good-will have set down nothing new:
Nor holds the land another book for you
That has the tale in full with naught beside,
So unto me let your good word betide;
Though, take it as ye may, no small delight
I had, herein this well-loved tale to write."

The argument placed by Morris at the head of *The Doom of King Acrisius* is in these words: "Acrisius, King of Argos, being warned by an oracle that the son of his daughter Danaë should slay him, shut her up in a brazen tower built for that end beside the sea; there, though no man could come nigh her, she nevertheless bore a son to Jove, and she and her new-born son, set adrift on the sea, came to the island of Seriphos. Thence her son, grown to manhood, set out to win the Gorgon's Head, and accomplished that end by the help of Minerva; and afterwards rescued Andromeda, daughter of Cepheus, from a terrible doom, and wedded her. Coming back to Seriphos, he took his mother thence, and made for Argos, but by stress of weather came to Thessaly, and there, at Larissa, accomplished the prophecy, by unwittingly slaying Acrisius. In the end he founded the city of Mycenæ, and died there."

This story, the longest of the series thus far, is followed by this exquisite

INTERLUDE.

Before the last words of his tale were done [1]
The purple hills had hidden half the sun,
But when the story's death a silence made
Within the hall, in freshness and in shade
The trembling blossoms of the garden lay. [2]
Few words at first the elder men could say,
For thinking how all stories end with this,
Whatever was the midway gain [3] and bliss:
"He died, and in his place was set his son;
He died, and in a few days every one
Went on their way as though he had not been."
Yet with the pictures that their eyes had seen,
As still from point to point that history passed,
And round their thoughts its painted veil was cast,
Their hearts were softened, — far away they saw
That other world, [4] that 'neath another law
Had lived and died; when man might hope to see
Some earthly image of divinity,
And yet not die, but, strengthened by the sight,
Cast fear away, and go from might to might,
Until to godlike life, though short, he came,
Amidst all losses winning hope of fame,
Nor losing joy the while his life should 'dure,
For that at least his valiant strife made sure,
That still in place of dreamy, youthful hope,
With slow decay and certain death could cope.

[1] *Before*, etc. There are few of the interludes that surpass this one in beauty, which follows the elder's story as if his words had slowly passed into a strain of exquisite low music.

[2] *The trembling*, etc. There is here correspondence of sound to sense.

[3] *The midway gain.* The use of *midway* as an adjective is Shakespearian. Cf. *Lear*, iv. 6. 13:

"The crows and choughs that wing the midway air."

It occurs in 2023 of the *Prologue*.

[4] *That other world*, etc. The world which owned the sway of the Greek and Roman gods.

So mused the Wanderers, and awhile might deem
That world might not be quite an empty dream,
But dim foreshadowings of what yet might come
When they perforce must leave that new-gained home,
Foreshadowings mingled with the images
Of man's misdeeds in greater days than these.

With no harsh words their musing was undone,
The garden birds sang down the setting sun,
A rainy wind from 'twixt the trees arose,
And sang a mournful counterpoint[1] to those;
And, ere the rain amidst the dark[2] could fall,
The minstrel's song was ringing through the hall.

PRELUDE TO THE PROUD KING.

6. *The narrow sea.* The North Sea.

7. *Us Drontheimers.* This is the first instance where the precise home of the Wanderers is definitely named. The city, rather than the province of Drontheim or Trondjhem, is probably meant. See on *Prologue*, 128.

14. *Guesten.* The use of this word as part of a substantive compound is perhaps peculiar to Morris. As a verb, meaning "to lodge as a guest," it is occasionally heard in Scotland. In his translation of the *Odyssey*, xiv. 52 and 317, etc., Morris uses the word *guesting*, a participle derived from the obsolete verb *guest*.

17–20. *Still . . . was slain.* Morris indulges in a good-natured thrust at English vanity here. The passage of which this is part is one of the comparatively few humorous touches in Morris's verse. In this respect he differs greatly from Tennyson, whose pages sparkle with the play of a keen but delicate humor.

27–30. *For at . . . behold.* The Wanderer is about to recount the condition of France thirty or more years previously, when its fairest provinces felt the English rule, when he remembers that Rolf has already told of this and checks himself.

39. *Outland.* See on *Prologue*, 2300.

40. *Fen.* The Fens, to which part of England allusion is here made, occupy most of Lincolnshire, with portions of the adjacent counties. They were once impassable morasses, but a careful system of drainage and reclamation has made them among the most fertile parts of England.

41. *An English town.* Peterborough.

42. *Cross-timbered* = Half-timbered. "A term applied to a style of decorative house-building extensively practised in Europe in the six-

[1] *Counterpoint.* "The art of combining melodies. Its name arose from the ancient system of notation by points or "pricks." When one set of points was added to another, to signify the simultaneous performance of various melodies agreeing in harmony, it was called "point against point," — i. e. contrapunctum, or counterpoint" (Grove's *Dict. of Music*). Morris uses the word in the sense of *undertone*.

[2] *The rain amidst the dark.* The mingled sensations called up by the rain at night have perhaps never been more sharply hinted at than in this brief expression.

teenth and seventeenth centuries, in which the foundations and principal supports were of stout timber, and all the interstices of the front of the building filled in with plaster" (*Imp. Dict.*).

43–53. *Three gables . . . porch.* The description in this passage is that of Peterborough Cathedral as it appeared in Chaucer's time. The west front dates from between 1200 and 1222, and consists of three great arches eighty-one feet high, the centre one being narrower than the others. The arches are supported by pillars and are faced with banded shafts, while beyond them north and south rise square turrets capped with spires and pinnacles. The spire and pinnacles of the south turret date from about 1360, and here we may suppose the Wanderer to have seen the masons at their work in his youth.

46. *Flowers no summer field doth see.* Referring to the conventional forms of floral ornament employed by the mediæval architects.

49. *A thin noise far away.* Any one who has heard from the ground the clinking of mason's tools far above him will recognize readily the appropriateness of the use of the adjective *thin*. Says a writer in the *University Magazine:* "How many are there with senses so exquisitely cultivated that in the description of common things they can hit upon just the right tone that will bring poetic effect? It would be a fair challenge whether the subdued ring of the trowel as it taps the stone could in any way be better expressed than by the simple expression 'a thin noise.'"

61. *Minster close.* See on *Atalanta's Race*, iii. 8.

62. *Walls, like cliffs new made.* The west front of Peterborough Cathedral is 156 feet broad, and the height from the ground to the top of the north and south spires is exactly the same. Peterborough takes perhaps the highest rank among English cathedrals of the second class, and the beautiful triple arch of its west front is a unique feature. The comparison, *like cliffs new made*, is an apt one. The position of the cathedral, rising above a low-roofed town in a flat country, does not allow of its being dwarfed by other buildings or the near presence of hills, and its cliff-like walls are therefore seen to fullest advantage.

THE PROUD KING.

In the *Gesta Romanorum*, the most popular story-book of the Middle Ages, the story of Jovinian is thus given (Swan's translation of the *Gesta Romanorum*, revised by Wynnard Hooper):

"When Jovinian was emperor, he possessed very great power; and as he lay in bed reflecting upon the extent of his dominions, his heart was elated to an extraordinary degree. 'Is there,' he impiously asked, — 'is there any other god than me?' Amid such thoughts he fell asleep.

"In the morning he reviewed his troops, and said, 'My friends, after breakfast we will hunt.' Preparations being made accordingly, he set out with a large retinue. During the chase the emperor felt such extreme oppression from the heat, that he believed his very existence depended upon a cold bath. As he anxiously looked around, he discovered a sheet of water at no great distance. 'Remain here,' said he to his

guard, 'until I have refreshed myself in yonder stream.' Then, spurring his steed, he rode hastily to the edge of the water. Alighting, he divested himself of his apparel, and experienced the greatest pleasure from the invigorating freshness and coolness. But whilst he was thus employed, a person similar to him in every respect, — in countenance and gesture, — arrayed himself unperceived in the emperor's dress, and then mounting his horse rode off to the attendants. The resemblance to the sovereign was such, that no doubt was entertained of the reality; and when the sport was over, command was issued for their return to the palace.

"Jovinian, however, having quitted the water, sought in every possible direction for his horse and clothes, and to his utter astonishment could find neither. Vexed beyond measure at the circumstance (for he was completely naked, and saw no one near to assist him), he began to reflect upon what course he should pursue. 'Miserable man that I am,' said he, 'to what a strait am I reduced! There is, I remember, a knight residing close by, whom I have promoted to a military post; I will go to him, and command his attendance and service. I will then ride on to the palace, and strictly investigate the cause of this extraordinary conduct.' Jovinian proceeded, naked and ashamed, to the castle of the aforesaid knight, and beat loudly at the gate. The porter inquired the cause of the knocking. 'Open the gate,' said the enraged emperor, 'and you will see who I am.' The gate was opened; and the porter, struck with the strange appearance he exhibited, replied, 'In the name of all that is marvellous, what are you?' 'I am,' said he, 'Jovinian, your emperor; go to your lord, and command him, from me, to supply the wants of his sovereign. I have lost both horse and clothes.' 'Thou liest, infamous ribald!' shouted the porter; 'just before thy approach, the Emperor Jovinian, accompanied by the officers of his household, entered the palace. My lord both went and returned with him, and but even now sat with him at meat. But because thou hast called thyself the emperor, my lord shall know of thy presumption.' The porter entered, and related what had passed. Jovinian was introduced, but the knight retained not the slightest recollection of his master, although the emperor remembered him. 'Who are you?' said the former, 'and what is your name?' 'I am the Emperor Jovinian,' rejoined he; 'canst thou have forgotten me? At such a time I promoted thee to a military command.' 'Why, thou most audacious scoundrel,' said the knight, 'darest thou call thyself the emperor? I rode with him myself to the palace, from whence I am this minute returned. But thy impudence shall not go without its reward. Flog him,' said he, turning to his servants, 'flog him soundly, and drive him away.' This sentence was immediately executed; and the poor emperor, bursting into a convulsion of tears, exclaimed: 'Oh, my God, is it possible that one whom I have so much honored and exalted should do this? Not content with pretending ignorance of my person, he orders these merciless villains to abuse me!' He next thought within himself, 'There is a certain duke, one of my privy councillors, to whom I will make known my calamity. At least he will enable me to return decently to the palace.' To him, therefore, Jovinian pro-

ceeded; and the gate was opened at his knock. But the porter, beholding a naked man, exclaimed in the greatest amaze, 'Friend, who are you, and why come you here in such a guise?' He replied: 'I am your emperor; I have accidentally lost my clothes and my horse, and I have come for succor to your lord. I beg you, therefore, to do me this errand to the duke.' The porter, more and more astonished, entered the hall, and communicated the strange intelligence he had received. 'Bring him in,' said the duke. He was brought in, but neither did he recognize the person of the emperor. 'What art thou?' he asked. 'I am the emperor,' replied Jovinian, 'and I have promoted thee to riches and honor, since I made thee a duke and one of my councillors.' 'Poor mad wretch!' said the duke, 'a short time since I returned from the palace, where I left the very emperor thou assumest to be. But since thou hast claimed such rank, thou shalt not escape unpunished. Carry him to prison, and feed him with bread and water.' The command was no sooner delivered than obeyed; and the following day his naked body was submitted to the lash, and he was again cast into the dungeon.

"Thus afflicted, he gave himself up to the wretchedness of his untoward affliction. In the agony of his heart, he said, 'What shall I do? oh, what will be my destiny? I am loaded with the coarsest contumely, and exposed to the malicious observation of my people. It were better to hasten immediately to my palace, and there discover myself, — my servants will know me; and even if they do not, my wife will know me!' Escaping, therefore, from his confinement, he approached the palace and beat upon the gate. 'Who art thou?' said the porter. 'It is strange,' replied the aggrieved emperor, 'it is strange that thou shouldst not know me, — thou who hast served me so long!' 'Served *thee!*' returned the porter, indignantly; 'thou liest abominably. I have served none but the emperor.' 'Why,' said the other, 'thou knowest that I am he. Yet though you disregard my words, go, I implore you, to the empress; communicate what I will tell thee, and by these signs bid her send the imperial robes, of which some rogue has deprived me. The signs I tell thee of are known to none but ourselves.' 'In verity,' said the porter, 'thou art mad. At this very moment my lord sits at table with the empress herself. Nevertheless, out of regard for thy singular merits, I will intimate thy declaration within; and rest assured, thou wilt presently find thyself most royally beaten.' The porter went accordingly, and related what he had heard. But the empress became very sorrowful, and said, 'Oh, my lord, what am I to think? The most hidden passages of our lives are revealed by an obscene fellow at the gate, and repeated to me by the porter, on the strength of which he declares himself the emperor and my espoused lord!' When the fictitious monarch was apprised of this, he commanded him to be brought in. He had no sooner entered than a large dog, which couched upon the hearth and had been much cherished by him, flew at his throat, and, but for timely prevention, would have killed him. A falcon also, seated upon her perch, no sooner beheld him, than she broke her jesses and flew out of the hall. Then the pretended emperor, addressing those who stood about him, said, 'My

friends, hear what I will ask of yon ribald. Who are you, and what do you want?' 'These questions,' said the suffering man, 'are very strange. You know I am the emperor and master of this place.' The other, turning to the nobles who sat or stood at the table, continued, 'Tell me, on your allegiance, which of us two is your lord and master?' 'Your majesty asks us an easy thing,' replied they, 'and need not to remind us of our allegiance. That obscene wretch we have never before seen. You alone are he, whom we have known from childhood; and we entreat that this fellow may be severely punished, as a warning to others how they give scope to their mad presumption.' Then turning to the empress, the usurper said, 'Tell me, my lady, on the faith you have sworn, do you know this man who calls himself thy lord and emperor?' She answered, 'My lord, how can you ask such a question? Have I not known thee more than thirty years, and borne thee many children? Yet at one thing I do admire. How can this fellow have acquired so intimate a knowledge of what has passed between us?'

"The pretended emperor made no reply, but addressing the real one, said, 'Friend, how darest thou to call thyself emperor? We sentence thee, for this unexampled impudence, to be drawn, without loss of time, at the tail of a horse. And if thou utterest the same words again, thou shalt be doomed to an ignominious death.' He then commanded his guards to see the sentence put in force, but to preserve his life. The unfortunate emperor was now almost distracted; and urged by his despair, wished vehemently for death. 'Why was I born?' he exclaimed. 'My friends shun me; and my wife and children will not acknowledge me. But there is my confessor, still; to him will I go. Perhaps he will recollect me, because he has often received my confessions.' He went, accordingly, and knocked at the window of his cell. 'Who is there?' said the confessor. 'The Emperor Jovinian,' was the reply; 'open the window and I will speak to thee.' The window was opened; but no sooner had he looked out than he closed it again in great haste. 'Depart from me,' said he, 'accursed thing! thou art not the emperor, but the devil incarnate.' This completed the miseries of the persecuted man; and he tore his hair, and plucked up his beard by the roots. 'Woe is me!' he cried; 'for what strange doom am I reserved?' At this crisis the impious words which, in the arrogance of his heart, he had uttered, crossed his recollection. Immediately he beat again at the window of the confessor's cell, and exclaimed, 'For the love of Him who was suspended from the cross, hear my confession with the window closed.' The recluse said, 'I will do this with pleasure.' And then Jovinian acquainted him with every particular of his past life; and principally how he had lifted himself up against his Maker, saying that he believed there was no other God but himself.

"The confession made, and absolution given, the recluse opened the window, and directly knew him. 'Blessed be the most high God,' said he, 'now do I know thee. I have here a few garments: clothe thyself and go to the palace. I trust that they also will recognize thee.' The emperor did as the confessor directed. The porter opened the gate, and made a low obeisance to him. 'Dost thou know me?' said he. 'Very well, my lord!' replied the menial, 'but I marvel that I did not

observe you go out.' Entering the hall of his mansion, Jovinian was received by all with a profound reverence. The strange emperor was at that time in another apartment with the queen; and a certain knight came out of the chamber, looked narrowly at Jovinian, and returning to the supposed emperor, said, 'My lord, there is one in the hall to whom everybody bends; he so much resembles you that we know not which is the emperor.' Hearing this, the usurper said to the empress, 'Go and see if you know him.' She went, and returned greatly surprised at what she saw. 'Oh, my lord,' said she, 'I declare to you that I know not whom to trust.' 'Then,' returned he, 'I will go and determine you.' When he had entered the hall, he took Jovinian by the hand and placed him near him. Addressing the assembly, he said, 'By the oaths you have taken, declare which of us is your emperor.' The empress answered, 'It is incumbent on me to speak first; but Heaven is my witness that I am unable to determine which is he.' And so said all. Then the feigned emperor spoke thus: 'My friends, hearken! That man is your king and your lord. He exalted himself to the disparagement of his Maker; and God, therefore, scourged and hid him from your knowledge. I am the angel that watches over his soul, and I have guarded his kingdom while he was undergoing his penance. But his repentance removes the rod; he has now made ample satisfaction, and again let your obedience wait upon him. Commend yourselves to the protection of Heaven.' So saying, he disappeared. The emperor gave thanks to God, and lived happily, and finished his days in peace.

APPLICATION.

"My beloved, the emperor represents any one whom the pride and vanity of life wholly engross. The knight to whom Jovinian first applied is Reason; which ever disclaims the pomps and fooleries of life. The duke is conscience; the savage dog is the flesh, which alarms the falcon, — that is, divine grace. The wife is the human soul; the clothes in which the emperor was at last arrayed are the virtues that befit the true sovereign, — that is, the good Christian."

Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould, in his *Curiosities of Olden Times*, traces the story of Jovinian back to a Sanscrit source, and quotes a narrative bearing some points of similarity to it from the *Pantschatantra*, — a Sanscrit collection of tales dating from before the Christian era. A kindred narrative occurs in the Talmud, King Solomon being the chief actor in this account. But the story most nearly similar to that of *The Proud King* is that of *Robert of Cysille*, — an old English poem or metrical romance.[1] For a very beautiful modern version of this see Longfellow's *King Robert of Sicily*. Mr. Gould calls attention to the fact that "among Buddhists the false king is vivified by a crafty rogue's infused soul; among Jews he is a transformed devil; but among Christians he is an angel of light."

[1] A German edition of this, with notes by Richard Nuck, was published in Berlin in 1887, with the title *Roberd of Cisyle*.

I.

15. *Morning.* Accented on the second syllable, like many similar words in ancient ballads or modern verse in archaic form. Several examples of this occur in *The Earthly Paradise.* A familiar instance is found in Longfellow's *Wreck of the Hesperus*, as follows:

> "And the skipper had taken his little daughtèr
> To bear him company."

45. *Tales of people*, etc. Cf. *Prologue*, 142, 143.

57. *Apparelled.* Metrically a quadrisyllable, as elsewhere in Morris.

62. *Her the ancients fabled*, etc. Probably Hecate is alluded to here. Hecate was a moon goddess, and is sometimes identical with Artemis or Diana.

75. *Did off.* Doffed, a verb compounded of *do* and *off.* Cf. *do on* in 80 below.

87. *Chub.* A fresh-water fish of the carp family.

89. *The small pied bird.* The magpie.

Nathless. See on *Prologue*, 107.

91. *Of such a helpless man*, etc. The outlines of the story are taken from the *Gesta Romanorum*, as we have seen, but the filling in of the minor details is the poet's own. How admirably the hapless condition of Jovinian is emphasized by this little touch about the small pied bird.

96. *Ranger.* The keeper or guardian of the forest.

Leal. A Scottish term signifying faithful. Cf. Lady Nairne, *The Land o' the Leal.*

II.

5. *Wicket gate.* A small gate or door, especially one forming part of a larger door or gate (Wb.).

8. *Fell.* Hide.

20. *Carle.* Churl; sometimes peasant or rustic, as in IV. 36 below.

21. *Here is no gate.* Cf. *T. N.* iv. 1. 9: "Nothing that is so is so."

29. *Brown-bill.* The bill was a sort of battle-axe once used by English foot-soldiers. It received the appellation *brown* from its usual rusty appearance.

"The *black-bill*, or as it is sometimes called the *brown-bill*, was a kind of halbert, the cutting part hooked like a woodman's bill, from the back of which projected a spike and another from the head" (Grose). Cf. *twibil, Prologue*, 103, and see on same.

42. *Jape.* A jest or trick. Cf. *Sir Peter Harpedon's End*, i. 15:

> "What have I done that he should jape at me?"

Also *Id.* v. 143:

> "Nor yet as one that plays at japes with God."

49. *Losel.* A worthless person.

60. *Pleasance.* See on *Prologue*, 1329.

61. *In that mood*, etc. Cf. i. 20.

91. *Borel folk.* A Chaucerian term, *borel* being a coarse brown cloth formerly worn by persons of inferior condition. Hence the significance of the term as applied to peasants or people of humble rank.

103. *Unholpen.* See on *Prologue*, 137.

107. *Beneath some roof of ours*, etc. It will be noticed that Morris varies at this point from the account in the *Gesta Romanorum*.

126. *Woody bent.* A wooded hillside or slope. Cf. *Jason*, ii. 820:

"Betwixt the forest and the northern bent."

Also *Jason*, iii. 555:

"Unto the fold across the thymy bent."

III.

In the account of Jovinian's interview with Duke Peter, Morris varies considerably from the legend, both in making the meeting an accidental one and in the forbearance exercised by the duke.

6. *Men who ran*, etc. In former times known as linkmen, from *link*, a torch.

23. *Flatling.* Flatwise. Morris uses also *flatlings*. Cf. *Sir Peter Harpedon's End*, ii. (stage-direction), where Sir Peter is mentioned as striking at Sir Lambert 'flatlings with his axe.'

Sheathed. Used as a dissyllable here.

39. *Scathe.* Injury. The American editions print *scath.*

47, 48. *Deny me . . . of old.* A mocking allusion to the fact that the duke bears the same name as the faithless apostle.

49. *Maundy-week.* The last week in Lent, or Holy Week. The term *Maundy* is, however, usually confined to the Thursday of Holy Week, and is derived from the first of the words of the Vulgate to render the Saviour's words when after supper he washed his disciples' feet: "*Mandatum novum do vobis.*" The ceremony of washing the feet of poor persons in imitation of our Lord was called Maundy from the Scripture lesson appointed to be read at the time, *mandatum*, or, in French, *mandé*.

The night was cold. Cf. *John*, xii. 18.

70. *A coin*, etc. This incident is Morris's own, and is another illustration of the art with which he has embroidered upon the plain cloth of the monks' tale the rich devices of his fancy.

78. *Their shadows barred*, etc. An artistic touch which brings the scene before our eyes with peculiar vividness.

IV.

Morris's departures from the simple outline of the *Gesta* narrative become more marked as the poem proceeds; but of the artistic value and effectiveness of these enlargements and variations there can be no question.

27. *Weed.* Clothing, garments. (A. S. *waed*, *waede*, a garment.) Nares asserts that the word always implies an outer garment, but it is manifestly used here for Jovinian's entire raiment. Cf. 33, 69, and 97 below.

36. *Fair sir*, etc. The episode of Christopher-a-Green is full of a homely almost pathetic interest.

53. *Wain.* Wagon or cart. Cf. 20 above.

74. *John Hangman.* A familiar allusion to the executioner.

96. *Fell.* See on ii. 8 above.

158, 159. *Though . . . color.* A little touch of a kind most distinctively Morris's own.

161. *Lief.* Beloved. Cf. *Jason*, ii. 714:

> "Who of us all is held both lief and dear."

In *Concerning Geffray Teste Noire*, 7, Morris uses it in the sense of *loyal*:

> "Such towns and countries as were lief
> To King Charles and Saint Denis."

190. *Peered down*, etc. A particularly vivid fragment of description.

192. *Without the bar.* Apparently some railing before the throne, within which only privileged persons were admitted. *Bar* as used in 214 below has a different meaning.

204–217. This is perhaps the strongest passage in the poem. The bitterness of the king's woe seems to be heightened with each succeeding line, the sharp contrast between the past and present ending with the hopeless heartbreak of the closing line:

> "God and the world against one lonely head."

214. *The bar.* The barrier or city gates. Cf. v. 1 below.

215. *Wreathed spires.* Perhaps spires or bell towers encircled with carved work. *Wreathed* is metrically a dissyllable here.

216. *Haled.* Dragged. Misprinted *hailed* in the American editions. In *Jason*, x. 588, the word occurs as a noun:

> "And so drew Argo up with hale and how."

V.

1. *Bar.* See on iv. 214 above.

12. *Ran in pools and shallows.* Cf. Tennyson, *The Brook*, 41, 42:

> "I bubble into eddying bays,
> I babble on the pebbles."

41. *Ancient.* Used in its obsolete sense of *aged* as implying wisdom and experience.

51–70. The passion of repentance that sobs through these lines is conceived in the poet's noblest vein.

102. *Houselled.* Having received the Eucharist.

> "A priest, a priest, says Aldingar,
> Me for to *housel* and to *shrive*." — *Old Ballad.*

VI.

24. *Perfay.* By my faith. A Chaucerian expression.

38. *Changed.* A dissyllable here.

47. *He spoke,* etc. In the disclosure to Jovinian alone of the angel's personality Morris vastly improves upon the original. The lesson was for Jovinian, not for his subjects; and nothing is lost by not making them partakers in the knowledge of what has happened.

121. *Tide.* Occasion. Here, perhaps, evening.

138. *Little heed,* etc. Cf. J. A. Froude: "Experience is no more transferable in morals than in art."

143. *I think by eld alone,* etc. Cf. Owen Meredith, *Lucile:*

> "Justice, judgment with years, or else years are in vain."

146. *Gauds.* Worthless ornaments.

INTERLUDE FOLLOWING THE PROUD KING.

4. *Some hard Sicilian.* Agathocles, a Syracusan tyrant, who reigned from 317 to 289 B. C. He was born at Thermi, in Sicily, and was a potter by trade. He rose to high military rank and became one of the wealthiest men of Syracuse. In 317 all the prominent citizens of Syracuse who opposed him were massacred by his orders, and he became tyrant of the city. He was distinguished for his cruelty and treachery.

6. *The fell Persian rod.* In regard to this Mr. Morris writes us: "I meant simply the king's or satrap's sceptre, symbolizing the Persian tyranny over the Ionians. You see the people of the city were supposed to be some Ionian kindred (like the Phoceans) who fled before the Persians, and I was putting them beside the Norsemen whose kindred fled before Harald Hair-fair and the feudal system."

8. *Armed.* Metrically a dissyllable.

9. *The fir-built Norway hall.* Of this Mr. Morris writes us: "The fir-built hall only alludes to the 'burning-in,' the last resource of an enemy in a blood feud or other deadly quarrel." See on 11, below.

10. *Bonders.* Erling Skialgsson, a famous bonder, was brother-in-law to King Olaf Tryggvesson, and one of the most considerable men of his time. Laing, in the preface to the *Heimskringla,* says: "We have no word in English, or any other modern language, exactly equivalent to the word *bondi,* because the class itself never existed amongst us. *Peasant* does not express it, because we associate with the word *peasant* the idea of inferior social importance to the feudal nobility, gentry, and landed proprietors of a country, and this bonder class was itself the highest class in the country. *Yeoman,* or, in Cumberland, *statesman,* expresses their condition only relatively to the portions of land owned by them; not their social position as the highest class of landholders. . . . The word *bonder* or *buandir* seems derived from *bu,* a country dwelling."

11. *Waiting for the fall*, etc. "Wood," says Laing in his preface to the *Heimskringla*, "has of necessity, in all times and with all classes, been the only building material in Norway. To be surprised and burnt by night within the wooden structures in which even kings had to reside was a fate so common that some of the kings appeared to have lived on board ships principally." The reference is possibly to the burning of King Siggeir's palace by Sigmund and Sinfotli. Cf. Morris, *Sigurd:*

"Then stark fear fell on the earl-folk, and silent they abide
Amid the flaming penfold; and again the great voice cried,
As the Goth-king's golden pillars grew red amidst the blaze.
. . . . . .
And then King Siggeir's roof-tree upheaved for its utmost fall,
And its huge walls clashed together, and its mean and lowly things
The fire of death confounded with the tokens of the kings."

Cf. also the burning of King Atli's hall by Queen Gudrun, which closes *The Story of Sigurd:*

"But the fire roared up against him, and the smoke-cloud rolled aloof,
And back and down the timbers, and the carven work of the roof;
There the ancient trees were crackling as the red flames shot aloft
From the heart of the gathering smoke-cloud; there the far-fetched hangings soft,
The gold and the seaborn purple, shrank up in a moment of space,
And the walls of Atli trembled, and the ancient golden place.
But the wine-drenched Earls were awaking, and the sleep-dazed warriors stirred,
And the light of their dawning was dreadful; wild voice of the day they heard,
And they knew not where they were gotten, and their hearts were smitten with dread,
And they deemed that their house was fallen to the uttermost place of the dead,
The hall for the traitors builded, the house of the changeless plain;
They cried, and their tongues were confounded and none gave answer again."

13. *The well-loved land*, etc. Concerning this passage Mr. Morris remarks in a letter to us: "Of course the allusion to the freeman sailing from his native land bears reference to the Norse exodus, though if you please you may apply it to your own early settlers, who, like the Egils, Scaldgrims, and Ingolfs of Norway, fled from 'the troubling of kings and scoundrels,' as the *Vatns daela Saga* puts it."

MAY.

10. *Minstrelsy*. Singers.

13. *The light gathered*. The details of an entire sunrise are here condensed in one forceful expression.

14. *And shuddered*, etc. Even on this morn of May, when Youth and Love would seem to hold sole dominion, Age and Death are not long absent from the scene. The world may momentarily forget the future, but the pensive spirit sees it always shadowing the present.

14. *Love passed me*, etc. Cf. Will Wallace Harney, *Adonais:*

"Love left us at the dying of the mellow autumn eves."

16. *Ousel*. A poetical name for the blackbird. Cf. Tennyson, *The Gardener's Daughter*, 93:

"The merry ousel fluted in the elm."

18. *The brown birds.* The nightingale. Cf. 1 above.

At the first of the May feasts the story told is the familiar one of Cupid and Psyche. Another English poet, Robert Bridges, has within a few years again related it in his volume *Eros and Psyche*, and in beauty of description and melody of verse there is little to choose between the version of Morris and that of Bridges.

PRELUDE TO THE STORY OF CUPID AND PSYCHE.

Now must these men be glad a little while
That they had lived to see May once more smile
Upon the earth; wherefore, as men who know
How fast the bad days and the good days go,
They gathered at the feast: the fair abode
Wherein they sat, o'erlooked across the road
Unhedged green meads, which willowy streams passed through;
And on that morn, before the fresh May dew [1]
Had dried upon the sunniest spot of grass,
From bush to bush did youths and maidens pass
In raiment meet for May apparelled,
Gathering the milk-white blossoms and the red; [2]
And now, with noon long past, and that bright day
Growing aweary, on the sunny way
They wandered, crowned with flowers, and loitering,
And weary, yet were fresh enough to sing
The carols of the morn, and, pensive, still
Had cast away their doubt of death and ill,
And, flushed with love, no more grew red with shame.

So to the elders as they sat, there came,
With scent of flowers, the murmur of that folk
Wherethrough from time to time a song outbroke,
Till scarce they thought about the story due;
Yet, when anigh to sunsetting it grew,
A book upon the board an elder laid,
And turning from the open window said,
'Too fair a tale the lovely time doth ask,
For this of mine to be an easy task,
Yet in what words soever this is writ,
As for the matter, I dare say of it
That it is lovely as the lovely May;
Pass then the manner, since the learned say
No written record was there of the tale,
Ere we from our fair land of Greece set sail:
How this may be I know not, this I know
That such-like tales the wind would seem to blow
From place to place, e'en as the feathery seed
Is borne across the sea to help the need
Of barren isles; so, sirs, from seed thus sown,
This flower, a gift from other lands, has grown.

[1] *Before the fresh May dew.* Cf. Herrick, *Corinna's Going A-maying:*

"There 's not a budding boy or girl this day
But is got up and gone to bring in May.
A deal of youth ere this is come
Back, and with whitethorn laden, home."

[2] *Milk-white blossoms and the red.* It is in such lines as this that we taste the purest Chaucerian flavor of Morris's verse. The mediæval mind was not over-observant

The argument of this delightful tale is thus given in *The Earthly Paradise:* "Psyche, a king's daughter, by her exceeding beauty caused the people to forget Venus; therefore the goddess would have destroyed her; nevertheless she became the bride of Love, yet in an unhappy moment lost him by her own fault, and wandering through the world suffered many evils at the hands of Venus, for whom she must accomplish fearful tasks. But the gods and all Nature helped her, and in process of time she was reunited to Love, forgiven by Venus, and made immortal by the Father of gods and men."

The interlude which follows in this place seems to us one of the most finished of all these connecting links of verse:

INTERLUDE.

Or e'er his tale was done, night held the earth;
Yea, the brown bird grown bold, as sounds of mirth [1]
Grew faint and scanty, now his tale had done,
And by his mate abode the next day's sun; [2]
And in those old hearts did the story move
Remembrance of the mighty deeds of love,
And with these thoughts did hopes of life arise,
Till tears unseen were in their ancient eyes,
And in their yearning hearts unspoken prayers,
And idle seemed the world with all its cares.

Few words they said; the balmy odorous wind
Wandered about, some resting-place to find;
The young leaves rustled 'neath its gentle breath,
And here and there some blossom burst his sheath,[3]
Adding unnoticed fragrance to the night;
But, as they pondered, a new golden light
Streamed over the green garden, and they heard
Sweet voices sing some ancient poet's word
In praise of May, and then in sight there came
The minstrels' figures underneath the flame
Of scented torches passing 'twixt the trees,
And soon the dusky hall grew bright with these,
And therewithal they put all thought away,
And midst the tinkling harps drank deep to May.

PRELUDE TO THE WRITING ON THE IMAGE.

5. *The changeful agony*, etc. In this one strong line is summed the whole history of the slow, and oftentimes disheartening advance of spring, not of one spring only but of countless springs.

of refinements of color. Red and blue it knew, and white and black, as well as green and yellow; and it recognized when these colors were strong or weak, but farther than this it did not go, or else it lacked expression for the subtler divisions of color.

[1] *The brown bird.* The nightingale. Cf. *May*, 18.

[2] *Abode.* Awaited.

[3] *Some blossom burst its sheath.* The exquisite description of a soft spring night is rounded to perfection by this realistic touch.

11. *As some blossom's smell*, etc. Cf. W. W. Story, *Violet:*

"Oh! faint delicious springtime violet,
Thine odor, like a key,
Turns noiselessly in memory's wards to let
A thought of sorrow free.

"The breath of distant fields upon my brow
Blows through that open door
The sound of wind-borne bells more sweet and low,
And sadder than of yore."

THE WRITING ON THE IMAGE.

THIS tale is the 107th of the tales in the *Gesta Romanorum* (Swan's translation, revised by Wynnard Hooper), and there reads as follows:

"There was an image in the city of Rome standing in an erect posture, with the dexter hand outstretched; and upon the middle finger was written, 'STRIKE HERE.' The image stood a long time in this manner, and no one understood what the inscription signified. It was much wondered at and commented on; but this was all, for they invariably departed as wise as they came. At last a certain subtle clerk, hearing of the image, felt anxious to see it; and when he had done so, he observed the superscription, '*Strike Here.*' He noticed that when the sun shone upon the image the outstretched finger was discernible in the lengthened shadow. After a little consideration he took a spade, and where the shadow ceased dug to the depth of about three feet. This brought him to a number of steps which led into a subterranean cavity. Not a little exhilarated with his discovery, the clerk prosecuted the adventure. Descending the steps, he entered the hall of a magnificent palace, in which he perceived a king and queen and many nobles seated at table, and the hall itself filled with men. They were all habited in costly apparel and kept the most rigid silence. Looking about, he beheld in one corner of the place a polished stone, called a carbuncle, by the single aid of which the hall was lighted. In the opposite corner stood a man armed with a bow and arrow, in the act of taking aim at the precious stone. Upon his brow was inscribed, 'I am what I am: my shaft is inevitable; least of all can yon luminous carbuncle escape its stroke.' The clerk, amazed at what he saw, entered the bedchamber, and found a multitude of beautiful women arrayed in purple garments, but not a sound escaped them. From thence he proceeded to the stables, and observed a number of horses and asses in their stalls. He touched them, but they were nothing but stone. He visited all the various buildings of the palace, and whatsoever his heart desired was to be found there. Returning to the hall, he thought of making good his retreat. 'I have seen wonders to-day,' said he to himself, 'but nobody will credit the relation, unless I carry back with me some incontrovertible testimony.' Casting his eyes upon the highest table, he beheld a quantity of golden cups and beautiful knives, which he approached, and laid his hands upon one of each, designing to carry

them away. But no sooner had he placed them in his bosom than the archer struck the carbuncle with the arrow and shivered it into a thousand atoms. Instantly the whole building was enveloped in thick darkness, and the clerk, in utter consternation, sought his way back. But being unable, in consequence of the darkness, to discover it, he perished in the greatest misery, amid the mysterious statues of the palace.

APPLICATION.

"My beloved, the image is the devil; the clerk is any covetous man who sacrifices himself to the cupidity of his desires. The steps by which he descends are the passions. The archer is death, the carbuncle is human life, and the cup and knife are worldly possessions."

Longfellow, in his *Morituri Salutamus*, has the following version of the story:

"In mediæval Rome, I know not where,
There stood an image with its arm in air,
And on its lifted finger, shining clear,
A golden ring with the device, 'Strike here!'
Greatly the people wondered, though none guessed
The meaning that these words but half expressed,
Until a learned clerk, who at noonday
With downcast eyes was passing on his way,
Paused, and observed the spot, and marked it well,
Whereon the shadow of the finger fell;
And, coming back at midnight, delved, and found
A secret stairway leading underground.
Down this he passed into a spacious hall,
Lit by a flaming jewel in the wall;
And opposite, in threatening attitude,
With bow and shaft a brazen statue stood.
Upon its forehead, like a coronet,
Were these mysterious words of menace set:
'That which I am, I am; my fatal aim
None can escape, not even yon luminous flame!'

"Midway the hall was a fair table placed,
With cloth of gold, and golden cups enchased
With rubies, and the plates and knives were gold,
And gold the bread and viands manifold.
Around it, silent, motionless, and sad,
Were seated gallant knights in armor clad,
And ladies beautiful with plume and zone,
But they were stone, their hearts within were stone;
And the vast hall was filled in every part
With silent crowds, stony in face and heart.

"Long at the scene, bewildered and amazed,
The trembling clerk in speechless wonder gazed;
Then from the table, by his greed made bold,
He seized a goblet and a knife of gold,
And suddenly from their seats the guests upsprang,
The vaulted ceiling with loud clamors rang,
The archer sped his arrow, at their call,
Shattering the lambent jewel on the wall,
And all was dark around and overhead; —
Stark on the floor the luckless clerk lay dead!

"The writer of this legend then records
Its ghostly application in these words:

The image is the Adversary old,
Whose beckoning finger points to realms of gold;
Our lusts and passions are the downward stair
That leads the soul from a diviner air;
The archer, Death; the flaming jewel, Life;
Terrestrial goods, the goblet and the knife;
The knights and ladies, all whose flesh and bone
By avarice have been hardened into stone;
The clerk, the scholar whom the love of pelf
Tempts from his books and from his nobler self."

"This story," says Warton, "was originally invented by Pope Gerbert, or Sylvester II., who died in the year 1003. He was eminently learned in the mathematical sciences, and on that account was styled a magician. William of Malmesbury is, I believe, the first writer now extant by whom it is recorded."

4. *Cornel-wood.* See on *Atalanta's Race*, I. 14, and cf. 326 below.

19. *Nothing.* At the end of this line this word is accented on the second syllable. See on *Proud King*, i. 15.

24. *Once watched with awe.* Cf. Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*, 220, 221:

"Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face."

29. *All is over*, etc. A writer in the *Edinburgh Review* for January, 1871, after asserting that the poet "never cares to lift his eyes from the earth, except to the visible heaven in which we may see the glories of dawn and sunset, adduces this poem in evidence of his theory. He says: "The fact that a log of wood will last

'While many a life of man goes past,
And all is over in short space,'

is a reason for not fearing what any son of man can do, and for being

'merry while we may,
For men much quicker pass away'

than the tablet on which a tale is written. It is true that it is a wicked sorcerer who asks,

'Who knoweth certainly
What haps to us when we are dead?'

and answers,

'Truly, I think by likelihead,
Naught haps to us of good or bad.
Therefore on earth will I be glad,
A short space free from hope or fear.'

But everywhere the signs are manifest that to the mind of the poet the future presents the same utter blank, and that life is not merely a mystery but an unsubstantial and wearisome dream."

The reviewer here has fallen into the common error of identifying an author with his work. The temper of the poet's mind *may* be what the critic avers it to be, but we have no certain knowledge that it is. The spirit of *The Earthly Paradise* is that of the later Middle Ages, when the glow and fervor of the Crusaders' era had given place to an intellectual weariness. The men of the fourteenth century were disposed to keep fast hold of the present and to make the most of it. This epicurean

spirit permeated the life of the time, and no modern writer treating of that far-off century has so accurately reproduced this feeling as William Morris. The mental paganism that had lain dormant for so many centuries had roused itself and found its expression in this dreary philosophy.

31. *A man of Sicily.* The country of the clerk is not mentioned in the *Gesta Romanorum.*

68. *Forthright.* Forthwith, at once. Cf. Morris's translation of the *Odyssey*, xxiv. 510:

> "But Telemachus the heedful thus answered him forthright."

71. *At midnight.* The original version quoted above leaves it to be inferred that he came by night; but Malmesbury's version states that he came at night, and with him a page bearing a lamp.

78. *He 'gan to dig.* "By a magical operation he opened a wide passage in the earth" (Malmesbury).

83. *Clang.* An onomatopoetic word giving very distinctly the impression produced by the striking together of two metallic substances.

86, 87. *A plate of copper*, etc. This is one of the details added by Morris, who has throughout enriched the rather meagre sketch of mediæval times with the adornments of his own imagination.

130. *Likelihead.* Not found in the dictionaries, but formed after the analogy of many old words in which we find *-head* = *-hood.*

145. *Lamps were hung.* A circumstance not mentioned by the originator of the story, who likewise omits all mention of the curtain spoken of in 148 below.

167. *Doubted.* Imagined or fancied.

175. *Attired.* Metrically a trisyllable, as in 198 below.

180. *Were.* See on *Prologue*, 2260.

183, 184. *Beard . . . lay.* Cf. Tennyson, *The Day-Dream*, 153:

> "How say you? We have slept, my lords.
> My beard has grown into my lap."

201. Morris appears not to have noticed that he has no line rhyming with this one.

203. *Fret.* Perforated ornamental work.

211. *An image*, etc. It will be noticed that Morris, unlike Longfellow, makes no use of the inscription on the brow of the image. In this matter he may have preferred to follow Malmesbury, who does not mention it, rather than the *Gesta Romanorum.*

240, 241. *Took up . . . cup.* Malmesbury's account agrees with that of the *Gesta Romanorum* in asserting that when the clerk attempted to take anything from the table the crisis came. He says: "As they attempted to touch some of the rich furniture all the golden images seemed to rush upon them. Gerbert was too wise to attempt this a second time; but the page was bold enough to snatch from the table a golden knife of exquisite workmanship. At that moment all the golden images rose up with a dreadful noise; the figure with the bow shot at the carbuncle, and a total darkness ensued. The page then replaced the knife; otherwise they both would have suffered a cruel death."

244. *Recked no more*, etc. Cf. Tennyson, *The Two Voices*, 251 :

> "Tho' one should smite him on the cheek,
> And on the mouth, he will not speak.
> . . . . . .
> But he is still to praise or blame."

246. *In old days*. Cf. *Luke*, xvi. 20. For another allusion to this parable cf. *Prologue*, 125.

260. *A wonderful green stone*. Presumably an emerald. This episode is one which Morris has added to the legend.

274. *Stack*. The old form of the past tense of *stick*. The preterite *stack* is still in use in Yorkshire, according to Mätzner.

288. *Carbuncle*. The measure here requires the accent to be placed on the last syllable.

310–339. *On that same night*, etc. In the lines which follow, Morris rounds out the legend to artistic completeness, — a vast improvement on the mediæval legend, which comes to an end with the suddenness of the crack of a whip.

INTERLUDE.

4. *Nitocris' tomb*. Nitocris was a Babylonian queen supposed to have been the wife of Nebuchadnezzar. Herodotus relates that she built herself a tomb over the most frequented gate of the city, with an inscription to the effect that if any of her successors needed money he should open the tomb and take what he saw fit; but unless he were reduced to absolute want he should not open it, or he would repent of it. The tomb remained undisturbed till the time of Darius, who, considering it unreasonable to keep the gate closed (for no one would pass under a dead body) and a valuable treasure unserviceable, opened the tomb and found only the body of Nitocris and the inscription : "*Hadst thou not been insatiably covetous, and greedy after the most sordid gain, thou wouldst not have violated the sepulchres of the dead.*" Plutarch tells a similar story of Semiramis.

The Niflungs' fatal hoard. The great store of gold and precious stones which Siegfried, the prince of the Netherlands, carried away from Nibelungenland and gave to his wife as a dowry. After the murder of Siegfried, Hagan, his murderer, seized upon the hoard and concealed it in the Rhine for safe keeping. Kriemhild, the widow of Siegfried, after her marriage with Etzel, king of the Huns, invited Hagan to her court and cut off his head; and as no one knew where Hagan had hidden the treasure, it was lost forever.

5. *The serpent-guarded*, etc. The allusion is probably to the story, told in the *Volsunga Saga*, of the gold won by the craft of Loki, the Scandinavian god of strife, from Andvari the Elf-king. The treasure then became the property of Reidmar the Ancient, who was slain by his son Fafnir. Cf. Morris, *Sigurd :*

> "I have slain my father Reidmir, that I alone might keep
> The Gold of the darksome places, the Candle of the Deep."

Long years after, Regin, the brother of Fafnir, returned to his home, and found Fafnir changed into a serpent:

> "Then I went to the pillared hall-stead, and lo, huge heaps of gold,
> And to and fro amongst them a mighty Serpent rolled:
> Then my heart grew chill with terror, for I thought on the wont of our race,
> And I, who had lost their cunning, was a man in a deadly place,
> A feeble man and a swordless in the lone destroyer's fold;
> For I knew that the Worm was Fafnir, the Wallower on the Gold."

6. *Remembered.* Metrically a quadrisyllable here, but not in 11 below.

25. *Night was mixed with day.* Cf. Tennyson, *The Princess*, vi. 115:

> "With brow to brow like night and evening mixt
> Their dark and gray."

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